Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates
July – September 1994 Number 1

Light on the Path

THE INNER KRIYA OF SELF-ILLUMINATION

Our self-chosen kriyas (actions) are for the purpose of removing physical and mental obstacles to the free flow of the soul's creative forces. The removal of restricting influences allows spontaneous unfoldments of innate knowledge and powers of the true Self: our changeless, spiritual essence.

Discipleship

THE BLESSEDNESS OF INITIATION

Initiation is "a new beginning," a turning away from habit-bound behaviors in favor of conscious, intentional living which facilitates rapid spiritual growth. The occasion should not be lightly considered, for it is one of profound instruction, vital empowerment, direct blessing, and total commitment to God-realization. It is transformative and redemptive—an important event to be remembered and treasured.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates, to provide forthright answers to relevant questions and clear explanations in response to meaningful inquiries. Participation encouraged.

Publisher's Note

Radiance: A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates is published quarterly for the continuing education and spiritual support of devotees of God who aspire to illumination of consciousness and fulfillment of their soul destiny.

Most readers are persons initiated by me and are Center for Spiritual Awareness members. Some readers have other affiliations because of having been initiated by another representative of this tradition. We are all disciples of God; we are bonded by our common commitment and by grace.

A *forum* is a gathering place, a gathering of people with common interests, or a medium by which discussion and useful exchange can occur. For this reason, please use the participation form that is provided for sharing your thoughts and questions and making inquiries. If you are not yet a subscriber to this publication, refer to the information at the bottom of this page. Be sure to let us know when you were initiated, where, and by whom, as *Radiance* is only distributed to Kriya initiates.

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THE KRIYA OF SELF-ILLUMINATION

Seventy-four years ago, in the summer of 1920, in India, my guru Paramahansa Yogananda was preparing to come to America to begin his teaching mission. During an interlude of prayerful meditation he was visited in person by the mortal-immortal Mahavatar Babaji, who had revived the ancient teachings of Kriya Yoga and made them available once again to receptive truth seekers. At that time Babaji said, "Kriya Yoga, the direct way to God-realization, will ultimately spread to all lands, and aid in harmonizing the nations through the personal, transcendental perception of the Infinite by true devotees."

During the decades that followed, Paramahansaji taught and initiated more than one hundred thousand individuals, empowering them with the philosophy and practices which make possible knowledge and experience of God. Most of those whom he taught are now gone from the world scene, and only a few disciples who were personally trained and ordained, of which I am one, continue to represent and transmit this life-transforming way of facilitating awakened spiritual consciousness.

Even when teaching classes comprised of a thousand or more participants, my guru was aware of the fact that only a modest percentage of the students would continue with their practices. On one occasion he said, "I am planting seeds in their minds and in their consciousness, which may one day sprout and grow, and be the means of their Self-realization." His understanding was in accord with yogic teachings: that no spiritual gain is ever lost, because glimpses of higher understanding and fleeting incidents of soul awakening that impress one's mind with constructive memories are retained throughout one's physical life, and even for many incarnations. Therefore, while pleased when students remained committed to the spiritual path, Paramahansaji was not disheartened because others were

not. His was a universal view of humanity's awakening in the course of evolution.

I, too, am pleased when individuals with whom I have worked remain steadfast on the spiritual path, and I am not disheartened by the knowledge that many, who seem so intent upon spiritual growth, eventually become disinterested with the passage of time. During the almost forty years that I have been teaching, I have been privileged to initiate at least ten thousand persons into Kriya Yoga practices; many whom I know to be resolute on the path and many who have dropped away for one reason or another. Unless a devotee fervently desires God-realization with unwavering devotion, it is human nature to allow moods and whims to dictate mental states and behaviors. Most devotees can be assisted on the path by supportive encouragement, if circumstances are such that it is available and if they are responsive to it.

We are *called* to this path because our innate soul urge to have awareness restored to wholeness is compelling. Many who have become Kriya initiates are renewing their relationship with our guru line which was established in a previous incarnation. Many are coming into this relationship for the first time, because more souls are awakening during our present time-cycle and are seeking knowledge of how to live more effectively and of how to cultivate and express their soul qualities. Whether renewing their endeavors on this path, or coming to it for the first time, devotees should clearly understand that it is for persons who are willing to be committed to learning about God and universal processes, and willing and committed to living what they learn—for it is by doing this that orderly spiritual growth is facilitated. This path is for strong, courageous, expansive, and emotionally balanced people. It is not for the weak, fearful or insecure, self-centered, or emotionally immature.

Understanding the Spiritual Growth Process by Applying Valid Knowledge

Valid knowledge is knowledge that is productive of desired results when applied. We may acquire knowledge from an informed source—a wise person, a book written by a person of knowledge, or by revelation—but the only proof of knowledge lies in its applica-

tion. It is not only by knowing the truth, but by living the truth, that we realize freedom.

The Sanskrit word *kriya* means "action." The actions we implement to support wellness, success in endeavors, and spiritual growth are outer kriyas. The spontaneous actions which result in psychological transformation and unfoldment of soul awareness and capacities are inner kriyas. The inner kriya, the spontaneous inner action that prevails when the soul's urge in the direction of awakening is unrestricted, results in illumination of consciousness. The true Self of us is pure Spirit, an individualization of God's consciousness. While in a self-conscious (egocentric) state we cannot illumine ourselves. The mind, being a material organ, cannot illumine itself. Only the Self, the real Being, can manifest its radiance and wholeness. This is why it is taught that Kriya Yoga practice makes possible Self-illumination.

When I was the minister of the Self-Realization Fellowship church in Phoenix, Arizona, during the years 1952 and 1953, a visitor once confronted me with a pointed question: "Why is it," she inquired, "that you people are always talking about self-realization? Isn't that being too self-centered?"

Being new to the teaching, she was not then clear in her understanding about the difference between the Self as soul and self as ego-fixated personality identification. She was assuming that our emphasis was upon the latter, which certainly would have been the wrong emphasis for a truth student. I attempted to explain to her the difference between Self as soul and self as a limited perception of one's true being, and what it was we were aspiring to realize. I noticed, however, that her mind was either closed to the idea of grasping a new idea or that she was, at that time, incapable of understanding. (Also, my explanation may have been inadequate.)

In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (2:1,2) a comprehensive description of our path is given: "Regulation of mental and sensory impulses, study of lower (pertaining to the processes of objective nature) and higher (metaphysical) knowledge, and devotion to God, is the way to peace of soul. This is the path of Kriya Yoga. It is practiced to remove all physical and mental obstacles for the purpose of realizing God." Please note that the Kriya Yoga path, while focused on essentials, is broad in its scope.

It may be a normal response, because of desire for knowledge and experience of God, to immediately presume that the Kriya path is only that of devotion to God and meditation practices—but to allow that is a mistake. Inner work alone, without necessary attention given to supporting circumstances—including self-discipline, learning how to live effectively, and acquiring a comprehensive philosophical understanding of God as God is, and how to know and realize God—usually results in arrested emotional and intellectual growth, incapacity to live successfully, and frustration because of unsatisfying meditation results.

Our intentional practices, along with all else that we do to support personal growth and soul unfoldment, is our yoga practice. *Yoga* (from the verb-root *yug,* to "yoke" or to join together) is the procedure which makes possible experience of unified consciousness or wholeness. *Yoga* also means the culmination of effective application of procedures, which is wholeness, oneness, consciousness which is unfragmented.

In the *Yoga Sutras* (1:2), the final result of dedicated practice is explained as *Yogash chitta vritti nirodha* (Sanskrit): "Yoga is the regulation (and dissolution) of the modifications of the field of the mind." This allows whole, unmodified superconsciousness or samadhi to be experienced: consciousness devoid of fragmentation or a sense of "otherness." And, (1:3): "Upon dissolution of mental modifications and their transformations, the Self abides in its own nature." When this is not the realization, the opposite occurs (1:4): "In states of consciousness other than samadhi, the Self appears to be identified with the modes of the mind (its contents and operations)."

The primary purpose of Kriya Yoga practice is to detach awareness from externals, including mental processes, and by so doing restore it to wholeness. This results in Self-realization: experience of the true, changeless spiritual reality we are. Self-realization is not an attainment, not a condition to be created or caused to manifest. It is conscious knowledge and awareness of ourselves as spiritual beings. This fact should be understood from the outset of our discipleship commitment, otherwise there may be a tendency to endeavor to acquire spiritual awareness, or to produce it by good works, practice of meditation techniques, or by other means assumed to be causative.

When even a modest degree of Self-knowledge unfolds, we are better able to relate to the mind and to our circumstances because of having subjective understanding. We are able to remain objective in the use of mental abilities and in relationships. We can then function effectively. We can enjoy life without the bondage of attachments, delusions (erroneous beliefs), illusions (misperceptions), or to things or circumstances. We are able to creatively express, as agents of action and causation, without anxiety about the outcomes of our actions. This approach to living also beneficially facilitates meditation practice and spiritual growth generally. If we are anxious about the outcome of our meditation practice, self-conscious endeavor and stress may be obstacles to the realization of superconscious states we aspire to experience and actualize.

An insightful Kriya Yoga devotee will, therefore, engage in actions which are known to be useful to ultimate ends while leaving the results of endeavor to providence, to God's grace-providing influence. Every waking moment will be one in which to be engaged in spiritual practice. The thoughts we think, the feelings we allow to express, the actions we implement, the relationships we choose or allow, are to be those which are entirely life-enhancing and consciousness-elevating. To allow thoughts to be unregulated, urges and moods to be constantly shifting, actions to be impulsive or mechanical, and relationships to be nonuseful or unwholesome, is not the way of discerning, caring, intentional living. Such behaviors are obstacles to spiritual growth and restrictive of soul awareness and expression. For this reason the Kriya Yoga path is often referred to as "the way of right(eous) action," the chosen way of living in accord with causative laws which determine entirely constructive outcomes.

Fulfillment should not be thought of as a future-time happening but as a present possibility to be experienced. To actualize fulfillment we need to live in accord with nature's life-supporting influences, enjoy life and have all necessary desires effortlessly fulfilled and personal needs easily met, be affluent or in the flow of resources necessary for the accomplishment of purposes, and experience progressive spiritual growth leading to full God-realization and liberation of consciousness. If any of these "fulfillments" are lacking, our lives will not be satisfying or complete.

A natural, simple lifestyle is best: a way of living which

Paramahansaji often described as being governed by the ideal of "plain living and high thinking." For this, we should establish our priorities and give attention to what is most important. Activity should be balanced by rest, pure foods should be chosen, all personal circumstances should be entirely supportive of us and of our spiritual aspirations, and we should think in terms of service—how we can best use our knowledge, abilities, and resources for the highest good and the welfare of others. Instead of being motivated by thoughts of what we can get from life, we should be impelled by a willingness to learn, to grow, and to serve a higher cause. Doing this enables us to be conscious participants in the processes of evolution and results in a quickening of our spiritual growth.

One reason why many devotees of God do not experience satisfactory spiritual growth is that they are self-consciously small-minded. This condition is contractive, the very opposite of expansiveness. The ideal is to be large-minded and, from there, have awareness expanded to omnipresence. As this occurs, the universes, both objective and subjective, are experienced within one's field of awareness.

Spiritual aspirants, especially, should be accepting of the idea of being successful in all aspects of their lives. Any attitude of limitation is restrictive to the soul's innate urge to be freely expressive. To cling to attitudes of lack or limitation of any kind is to be spiritually impoverished. There are some sincere devotees who desire God-knowledge and God-relationship but who cannot even accept the possibility of being physically healthy, mentally competent, emotionally mature, happy in relationships, and productive in their endeavors. They are not able to accept success even at mundane levels. Because of this, they cannot accept success in awakening to more refined levels of spiritual awareness.

All physical and mental obstacles to spiritual growth are removed by right living practices. We do not have to understand everything about spiritual growth processes at the beginning of our quest for knowledge. All that is required is to apply what is known to be useful and to learn by experience. By living the truth we know, we provide for ourselves opportunities to experience the kriya (the spontaneous action) of Self-illumination.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF INITIATION

The occasion of our initiation into Kriya Yoga practices and the fellowship of the saints is to be venerated as a sacred event in eternity, for it is a turning point in our lives when our commitment to God-realization is confirmed and blessings flow.

A blessing is a divine action that can confer well-being, the prospering influence of grace, and authentic spiritual awakening and uplift. When circumstances are ideal during a Kriya Yoga initiation service, God's blessings flow abundantly without favor. They are available to all participants in accord with their receptivity. When Paramahansa Yogananda personally blessed disciples he sometimes said, "I am giving you everything. It is up to you to receive it." God is ever like this, giving us everything which is ours to receive by accepting.

Those who desire to be initiated into the practices of this path should prepare themselves by study, and by learning and practicing preliminary meditation procedures. There should be respect for the tradition and for the guru or teacher. The occasion should be approached with a pure heart and an open mind, for it is one of vital significance for the sincere spiritual aspirant. If the occasion is considered to be that of merely learning new or novel things, very little of lasting value will result. If it is seen as a life-transforming opportunity, that is what it will be.

In this tradition the person who facilitates the initiation service is one who has been initiated by his or her guru, has practiced the procedures, and who has been acknowledged by the guru as being a qualified representative through whom the teachings and the flow of grace through the line of gurus can be effectively transmitted. The teacher-facilitator, knowing this, imparts the teaching as learned from the guru and maintains a mental attitude and a state of consciousness which is open and clear so that knowledge can be shared

and spiritual forces imparted. It is recommended that the teacher-facilitator prepare ahead of time, by ascertaining the qualifications of the person to be initiated, and by being healthy, rested, and spiritually vital at the time of initiation.

The arrangements for the service may be simple, or may be planned to allow for more formal proceedings with ceremonial ritual to suit the occasion. The person to be initiated brings offerings of fresh fruit, a fresh flower, and a monetary contribution for the teacher or the teacher's charitable use. These are used during the latter stages of the initiation service.

To begin, the teacher will meditate to be established in Self-realization and will inwardly invoke the blessing-presence of God and the lineage of gurus. Then will follow instruction in practical matters relating to living a God-centered life, and instruction in the use of meditation technique.

In our tradition we teach mantra meditation first because it is easy to understand and practice. Then Kriya pranayama is taught: a procedure by which life forces are directed upward and downward through the chakras along the spinal pathway, using a specific breathing method. This is a more dynamic form of sushumna (path of God) breathing. Regular, right practice of this technique encourages life forces to ascend to the higher brain centers, awakens dormant energies, refines the nervous system, and restructures the brain over a period of time. The immediate response is inward turning of attention, accompanied by mental calm which allows concentration to be easily experienced and meditation to flow spontaneously. New initiates are counseled to practice this technique 14 times at the beginning of their meditation practice. (Fourteen times to ensure 12 complete cycles, upward and downward.) After the final kriya cycle the current is brought up and kept in the crown chakra while the inner gaze is directed through the spiritual eye and the breathing cycle is ignored.

Persons with high blood pressure, who are extremely ill, who have a serious heart problem, or who are severely emotionally disturbed are advised not to practice this technique. Women are advised to avoid practice of this technique during their monthly period or when pregnant. The reasons for these admonitions are practical. Kriya pranayama causes inner changes and directs life forces

upward. When one is physically unwell, or when the body's life forces are engaged in necessary actions such as removing waste matter or nurturing a fetus, it is best not to disturb their actions.

For persons who, for one reason or another, should not practice Kriya pranayama, an alternative practice is that of chanting Om at the chakras: beginning at the bottom and flowing upward, then returning to the bottom while chanting at the chakras in reverse order. When concluding this procedure, one does so at the crown chakra and proceeds to meditate.

While explaining how to practice Kriya pranayama, a simple technique used for the purpose of awakening dormant soul forces in the lower chakras is taught as a preliminary procedure to be practiced just prior to beginning the practice of Kriya pranayama. For persons adept in hatha yoga practices, maha mudra is included in this procedure.

A supplemental technique, Jyoti Mudra (technique for contemplating inner light and sound), is taught, to be practiced after the meditator has experienced the tranquil aftereffects of Kriya pranayama. This technique is also referred to as Yoni Mudra, the process which enables one to move awareness through "the pathway through which one is born to a higher state of consciousness." To do this, Kriya pranayama is used, along with inward focusing at the spiritual eye while chanting Om. For persons who are not to practice the pranayama, chanting through the chakras until concentration is steady at the spiritual eye is recommended. After active practice of the technique, one then sits merged in contemplation of Om and the inner light.

Attentive practice of these meditation techniques causes thinking to become more refined and then to cease, and calms the impulses that contribute to mental and emotional changes. The diminishing and removal of these obstacles to concentration allows spontaneous unfoldments of superconscious (soul) awareness and perception and experience of higher realities.

A blessing ceremony follows, during which the new initiate places the fruit, flower, and monetary offering before the altar and inwardly commits to the Kriya path, the way of right action and surrendered, discipleship service to God. The fruit symbolizes that the initiate henceforth offers the fruits (results) of all actions to the Infinite.

The flower symbolizes the devotee's devotion to God which is pure and steadfast. The monetary offering represents the sharing of material resources, freely given for charitable use.

The giving of the ritual items during the initiation ceremony should be understood as a demonstration of one's willing resolve to, from that moment forward, offer all actions to the Infinite, always be devoted to God, and always to consider oneself as but a custodian of resources which are to be rightly used and generously shared for worthy purposes. These attitudes and actions of offering everything to God should ever be in the forefront of the devotee's mind.

The initiate is then given a blessing, usually by the teacher putting his hands on the initiate's head and sharing good will and spiritual force that spontaneously flows. This act seals the initiate's gestures of commitment and confirms the authenticity of initiation. Sometimes a tangible flow of force is discerned by the initiate. Even if the flow of force is not felt, there can be a gentle awakening of dormant energies which can be nurtured by surrender to God and continued practice of meditation and other lifestyle routines.

Over a century ago, when Lahiri Mahasaya initiated disciples into Kriya Yoga meditation practices, he accepted a modest monetary donation. From time to time he would arrange to have the accumulated funds taken to Mahavatar Babaji in the Himalayas, who used them to feed the poor and provide other charitable services. It is understood that a monetary offering at the time of initiation is not payment for services rendered, for the teachings are freely given. But it is emphasized that devotees should understand that resources, including money, are not to be objects to which we become attached, but are to be used for constructive purposes.

Sometimes, especially if the initiation ceremony is formal, it is concluded by the serving of a small portion of food which has been offered first at the altar to God. The new initiate may also be invited to take a flower, flower petals, and/or fruit from the altar as a memento of the occasion.

It is recommended that a Kriya initiate consider what has been learned as personal and private, and that there be no discussion of it with anyone except one's teacher or guru for the purpose of review to improve understanding and practice. It is also recommended that a practicing initiate choose a lifestyle which is supportive of high

purposes. A wholesome diet is helpful, as is appropriate rest and attention given to other health-supporting measures. Intentional living and the inner transformations which occur as results of profound contemplation and Kriya technique practices cause physical changes which require good nutrition and good health to support. Moderation is the best way, avoiding extremes of all kinds.

Teaching methods and practices emphasized by various Kriya Yoga gurus and representatives may be personalized according to how they were taught and what their own spiritual growth experiences have been. But the central teaching is the same, as given by Mahavatar Babaji to Lahiri Mahasaya and transmitted through several branches or lines of initiate disciples to our present era. I teach as I learned from Paramahansaji and from my own realizations through the years.

An initiate is counseled to rely upon the Infinite at all times. If possible, the initiate should maintain contact with the guru or teacher because initiation is only the beginning of a longer process of spiritual growth that may unfold over many years. Mental and spiritual attunement with the gurus in the line of transmission should be cultivated until it is natural and permanent. This demonstrates the disciple's respect for the tradition as well as assists in the reception of waves of God's grace that flow from the field of God through the line of gurus. When possible, Kriya initiates should assist in the spread of knowledge for the benefit of new seekers on the path. This can be done quietly and appropriately, and never as an attempt to persuade or recruit participants.

And even if one's heart is overflowing with compassion for others, it is important that devotees see to their own wellness and spiritual awareness first. We have nothing of value to share with people in need unless we are steadfast in Self-realization. For this reason Paramahansaji usually devoted the early morning hours to meditation. He explained: "If I am not anchored in God, how can I share God with others?"

Basic books for Kriya devotees are Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, along with a few others mentioned on a special page elsewhere in this issue. Knowledge of God and of spiritual practices should be acquired, rationally analyzed, and meditatively contemplated if enlightenment is to be realized. Both intellectual

laziness and a tendency to avoid having to confront available knowledge are to be renounced. Blind devotion and indulgence in moods and emotional states is not the way of light, but the way of discontent: aimlessness, hopelessness, and world-weariness. These, and all other symptoms of ego-fixation, are pain-causing conditions which are easily eradicated by attentive, right practice of Kriya Yoga principles and procedures.

Until we are demonstrating clear understanding, there can be various challenges to our peace of mind and to our endeavors to accomplish worthy purposes. Personal circumstances may be restrictive or oppressive, physical ailments or impairments may be discomforting or restrictive, emotional conflicts may disturb our mental peace and even interfere with function and enjoyment, or obsessive ideas or irrational thoughts may cloud our attempts to use our intellectual powers. These more obvious obstacles to successful living and soul actualization can be removed by making right choices and implementing constructive actions. At a more subtle level, the causes of delusion, illusion, and soul frustration are rooted in the mind. Soul urges to express, mixed with sense-influenced impulses, cause mental waves or thought streams to flood the mind and fragment or distort awareness. Right Self-understanding and regular, attentive practice of meditation clears the mental field and allows the light of soul to shine of its own accord.

Steadfastness is a determining factor in spiritual growth. Lahiri Mahasaya often encouraged disciples with the words: "Keeping on, keeping on. One day, behold!, the divine goal!"

Dialogue

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

The information shared in this forum is in response to requests from readers. Please use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in our quarterly open discussions, to have your needs met and for the benefit of others.

Kriya Pranayama Practice Review

Several inquiries were received regarding the most effective way to practice the core technique of the Kriya Yoga meditation routines. This technique is variously referred to as Kriya Pranayama, Siddha Pranayama (the meditation practice of "accomplished" yogis), and Kundalini Pranayama.

The basic thing to remember when practicing is that you are interested in encouraging an upward flow of prana (life force) from the lower vital centers to the higher brain centers. This is accomplished by putting attention (and feeling-awareness) into the spinal pathway and drawing the current upward with inhalation. The key to effective practice is bodily relaxation, awareness in the spinal pathway, and gentle "inviting" or "pulling" of the current upward as you breathe in.

To facilitate feeling in the spine, when inhaling, the throat is partially expanded so that air flows against the back of the throat. This results in a mild, cool feeling which can be transferred to the spine. Feel that you are drawing a cool sensation up from the base of the spine to the top of the head, the crown chakra, as you inhale. Pause for a brief moment, then let exhalation occur as you feel a mild, warm sensation descending from the brain to the base of the spine. That is one cycle of Kriya Pranayama practice.

Beginning practitioners are advised to learn the process by inhaling and exhaling with the mouth partially open, to help in feeling the inflowing air directly against the back of the lower throat. Once the "feeling" is learned, the pranayamas can more comfortably be done by ordinary nostril breathing. Avoid making the process a vigorous physical exercise. It should be a gentle experience. During practice, the inner gaze remains directed to the spiritual eye. The heart (soul, Self) is overflowing with love for God and inspired aspiration to awaken to superconscious states and beyond.

All you have to remember is to draw the current up, pause for a fleeting moment, and let it flow down. Repeat for the prescribed or chosen number of times. Beginning practitioners are advised to do 14 cycles, then one more: leaving attention at the third eye and crown chakra after the final upward movement and removing attention from the breathing process. With attention and prana upward and inward, meditate in the deep silence, merging in the aftereffects mental tranquility of Kriya Pranayama practice. Initiates who have been practicing the technique for six months to a year on a regular schedule may increase the number of cycles, staying within the boundaries of comfort and avoiding any inclination to strain while practicing.

To facilitate the opening of the throat, to learn to acquire the feeling of suction (pulling the current upward) it is sometimes advised that the tongue be dropped back into the throat (just a little movement in that direction) or the tip of the tongue be placed against the roof of the mouth and curled back a bit. It is not necessary to become too involved in the physical mechanics of this process; just experiment until the desired feeling in the throat is experienced and a sensation of current-movement is obvious in the spinal pathway when inhaling and exhaling. When breathing in, with a marginally deeper breath than is usual, pull the current upward into the crown chakra. Allow exhalation to occur naturally and feel a gentle, warmth flowing from the crown chakra to the base of the spine.

Even if you do not actually feel the current moving, in the early stages of practice, the very fact that you are practicing the process will produce results at a subtle level. Avoid anxiety about results. Just practice on a regular schedule at the beginning of your meditation session. After Kriya Pranayama practice, give yourself to intro-

spective, meditative contemplation of the Infinite.

The immediate benefits of this practice are internalization of attention which improves concentration, and calming of mental processes. Extended durations of practice, that is, months and years of regular Kriya Pranayama as part of your meditation routine, awakens dormant soul forces in the physical and astral bodies, refines and enlivens the nervous system, and restructures the brain so that soul awareness is more easily processed through it.

Practice until the procedure is easy and enjoyable. Consider it to be a pleasant interlude during the early phase of your daily meditation routine. Avoid "interior discussions" with yourself about its usefulness. Do it as duty and let the results be what they will be. A major obstacle to success in practice is laziness. Another obstacle is mental perversity: resistance to useful change and making excuses for remaining as we are.

After Kriya Pranayama practice, meditate long and deep. Later, when inclined, do Jyoti Mudra, the supplemental technique, and meditate in the light while contemplating Om. Remember that meditation techniques are only tools to be used. When their purpose has been served, set them aside. The aim of meditation is not to become skillful in the practice of techniques, but to experience superconscious states, Self-realization, God-realization, and transcendental perceptions and realizations.

For inspiration-to-dedicated-practice of Kriya Yoga meditation techniques, read the references to Kriya Yoga in Paramahansa Yogananda's book *Autobiography of a Yogi* (see the index), my book *Life Surrendered in God*, and the *Studies in Truth Master Course* lesson series. The more familiar you become with the tradition and practices, the easier it will be for you to practice meditation and to live a focused discipleship life.

While maintaining your commitment on the spiritual path, avoid narrow-mindedness. Keep to your own path while allowing others to have their own.

How to Determine the Signs of Authentic Spiritual Growth

How can we recognize superconscious states as they unfold and

know we are progressing so that the ideal of permanent, pure consciousness does not seem so far removed from where we are in awareness and understanding?

Initial superconscious (soul awareness) perceptions during meditation (and at other times) are usually experienced as clear, tranquil states influenced by thoughts and emotional states. That is, we are aware of being somewhat soul-centered while, at the same time, we are aware of the existence of thoughts and shifting moods. We may experience this as a kind of double-consciousness, simultaneously aware on two levels. With practice, we can become more centered in tranquil awareness while observing thoughts and emotions as they fluctuate. We can then, by intention, adjust thoughts and emotions at will or disregard them by choice.

When early stages of superconscious awareness unfold during meditation, give your attention to the experience of them. Rest for a duration at a stage where you are comfortable; then be open to the possibility of experiencing a more refined state of superconsciousness. Each stage is redemptive, having a purifying effect on the mind and preparing the way for further unfoldments. When you are comfortable in superconsciousness, it will become your habitual state. Further unfoldments will spontaneously occur if gentle aspiration is constant and if willingness to allow spiritual growth is obvious.

During meditation, unfolding superconscious states will result in more mental peace, soul satisfaction, and expanded states of consciousness. After meditation an awareness of greater freedom will be more natural. During ordinary waking hours, degrees of cosmic consciousness will unfold, resulting in awareness of life as a wholeness, or life as one manifesting expression of God's reality. Intellectual skills will become more pronounced, intuition will allow clear insights, knowledge of soul-mind-body and God-Cosmic Mind-Universe relationships will be spontaneously Self-revealed. We become happier, more emotionally settled, more purposeful, and more effective in our endeavors as spiritual growth progresses.

One of the self-limiting obstacles to spiritual growth is that of habitually thinking of Self-realization as a goal to be accomplished or a status to be attained. In fact, Self-knowledge is already our innate condition. It is not to be acquired or attained, but only to be acknowledged, unfolded, and actualized. Attitudes, thoughts, and

behaviors which are inconsistent with the Self-realized state should be renounced by the committed devotee of God.

Arguing about the matter, or debating it, is not renunciation. To renounce means to "lay down" or "let go" of that which is not useful to our purposes or supportive of our aspirations. Sometimes, when this is done, one feels a sense of loss, an emptiness, because discarding attitudes, behaviors, and even some relationships does not always immediately result in awareness of fulfillment or improved circumstances. However, with renunciation of nonuseful circumstances we are at least in a better position to face life directly and be open to discovery of more worthwhile experiences.

Even before complete Self-realization is experienced, or actualized on a permanent basis, we can live as we know we shall live when we are fully and permanently Self-realized. When doing this, one need not feel that behaviors are false, for all we are doing is humanly endeavoring to emulate behaviors which will be natural for us when we are more spiritually awake and directed by soul impulses. When new on the spiritual path it may require the exercise of intention and will power to always be harmless, truthful, honest, selfless, in control of mental impulses and energies, inwardly content, self-disciplined, entirely pure in mind and heart, attentive to learning, and steadfast in devotion to God. When soul-directed because of being more spiritually awake, it will be natural and effortless to live like this.

How can we discern our real Selfhood? By withdrawing attention from all thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and conditioned states of consciousness, what remains is Self awareness. At first, we may not experience enlightened (completely knowledgeable) Self awareness but the experience will at least reveal to us our status as individualized units of consciousness. This can be a beginning on the enlightenment path.

Our right choices and right endeavors prepare us for spiritual growth. When we do our part to make ourselves receptive to soul unfoldment impulses, and to God's grace, our spiritual growth occurs quickly. Remember that every soul has an innate urge to have awareness restored to wholeness. Our intentional practices are for the purpose of removing mental and physical restrictions to the flow of creative forces of the soul. This is Kriya Yoga: actions which allow

realization of wholeness. At the soul level we are Self-complete. Hence the statement: "When established in pure consciousness the Self abides in its own nature." Problems arise when we are not established in pure consciousness: for our awareness is then inclined to identify with mental processes and their changes and transformations. Then follows delusions (attachments to fixed, erroneous beliefs), illusions (misperceptions of what is experienced or observed), and unwise behaviors and foolish relationships.

By dispassionate living (being appropriately active without blind emotional involvements) and by alert meditation practice, we can self-train ourselves to be established in pure consciousness at all times.

The "Holy Spirit," the enlivening influence of the Spirit of God, is ever involved in the field of manifest realms, contributing to orderly transformations and completion of impelled purposes. We experience its influence in our lives as being supportive and as contributing to our welfare and spiritual growth. Evidence of such actions are referred to as signs of God's grace.

A disciple asked his guru, "Sir, assure me of your blessing-grace and of God's grace."

The guru replied, "My grace you have, and God's grace you have; all that is needed now is your own grace."

We have to be willing to allow ourselves to learn and grow, and to do what we can to allow our innate soul impulse in the direction of wholeness to be expressive.

The actions of grace often have effects on our mental, emotional, and physical states, and upon circumstances and relationships. All such effects are, ultimately, for our highest good even if in the early stages of transformation we may sometimes feel uncertain about what is occurring. With the awakening of soul capacities, we may experience minor mental confusion as our view of life is altered, our thoughts about what is important change, and we become more aware of our inner potential and of many learning and growing opportunities. Emotional states may, likewise, become unsettled. We may feel confused or uncertain, and long dormant feelings may resurface and may need to be confronted and resolved. Changes in mental and emotional states, and physical transformations may result in physiological imbalance which will have to be corrected by giving atten-

tion to rest, diet, and other regimens necessary to restore the systems to a state of balance.

We should not assume, however, that every symptom of unrest or discomfort is due to spiritual growth influences. More often, they are due to the fact that we have neglected our life-enhancing routines or that we are merely experiencing challenges common to the human condition that will have to be confronted and resolved.

When we have personal desires to be fulfilled and Self-realized, our desires are impelling. The universe (which exists in Cosmic Mind) responds to our desires by moving to fulfill them. This means that our personal circumstances may be adjusted to provide us spiritual learning and growth opportunities or to remove obstacles to spiritual growth.

Releasing the Burdens of Guilt & Disbelief

Every now and then a person will ask, "How can we rid ourselves of the effects of false learning, the ideas and beliefs we acquired from others and accepted as true, and which still interfere with rational thinking and peace of mind?"

The direct way to dispel the effects of false learning is to learn what is true, accept it completely, and prove the validity of it by practical, personal application. The only satisfying way to rid ourselves of influences related to the past is to have the courage to think for ourselves and live with meaningful purpose. So long as we indulge in idle philosophical speculation, so long will we be inclined to remain mentally conflicted and emotionally unsettled.

A difficulty for some truth seekers who were exposed to erroneous teachings at an early age, is that of actually believing themselves to be worthy of spiritual growth, and of believing in the possibility of their being able to experience it. Sometimes, obsessive thought about such matters is really a form of neurotic preoccupation with the personality-self identity, supported by emotional immaturity—an unwillingness to be self-responsible for thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Especially is this so when one engages in frequent complaining, rationalizing of self-defeating behaviors, or engages in compulsive self-analysis: all of which are symptoms of

self-centeredness.

Some devotees with a fundamentalist Christian background may feel somewhat guilty about their spiritual practices which, though enjoyable and beneficial, were learned outside of traditional church boundaries. Or they may wonder how the teachings of (or about) Jesus can be fitted into a more universal philosophical view of God and cosmic processes. They may wonder about the existence of angelic beings, evil forces, satanic influences, or the end of the world as we know it. A useful approach, for such devotees, is to ignore prior traditional learning for a few months, while focusing on understanding life from a higher perspective and engaging in spiritual practices and living routines that can enhance personal function and improve circumstances. Then, when more spiritual growth has been experienced and actualized, everything can be examined with objectivity and better insight.

One truth, one fact of life, that a devotee should clearly understand is that, in spite of what unenlightened people may say, there is only *one* Being, Life, Power and Manifesting Substance: Supreme Consciousness or God. This understanding rules out any consideration of evil forces or intelligent agencies in contest with the innate inclination of souls to awaken to full knowledge and perfect realization.

The Clear Path Before Us & the Source of Revelation

Wherever in religious teachings or cultural lifestyles there is emphasis upon natural, orderly living and the cultivation of divine qualities, there is the *Sanatana Dharma*, "the Eternal Way of Righteousness." This is the true "religion," the timeless way to live that attunes us to the Infinite and liberates the soul. This teaching is to be found in all inspired scriptures of the world and in the philosophical systems that have emerged from various cultures. It is the central theme upon which all rational people can agree as being of value.

From whence does knowledge come? It emerges from consciousness, the source of all revelation. One appeal that the study of this basic teaching and the practice of yoga has for curious people, is

that it offers one the opportunity to investigate what is taught and to practice what is recommended for the purpose of personal discovery. All that has to be taken on faith are the basic principles which are to be tested by personal application. If they are not put to the test, discussion for the purpose of refuting them is sure to be both faulty and futile.

The Sanskrit word *veda* means "knowledge"—not information acquired from objective sources, but knowledge that arises from the core of one's being. Enlightened seers teach revealed knowledge. However, not all who teach philosophical principles and yoga practices are truly knowledgeable even if their intentions are good. That is why the truth student must eventually learn to rely upon his or her own intelligence, the faculty of discernment which makes possible determination of what is true in contrast to what is not.

"Revealed knowledge," if complete, is accurate, and will be found to be in agreement with knowledge arrived at by a rational intellectual process and by scientific experimentation. For instance, many of the explanations of the nature of mind and matter intuitively discovered by seers thousands of years ago are today being verified by psychologists and scientists. Increasingly, it is becoming more obvious that the realm of nature has a basis in a "permanent something" and that consciousness does not originate in matter nor is it confined to material forms or energies. The only circumstance that temporarily bonds our consciousness to mind and matter is our conscious or unconscious agreement to the relationship.

We can experience release from mind-matter identification by learning to view life from a free perspective and by the practice of Kriya Yoga meditation techniques which provide the means to shift our viewpoint from mind-body identification to clear, unmodified awareness. Experiencing this is the primary purpose of meditation practice. Preliminary stages of mental tranquility or "oneness" with an object of contemplation are to be transcended by the dedicated meditator. A mere adjustment of states of consciousness to a more comfortable level of experience, while interesting and sometimes beneficial, does not result in complete liberation of consciousness.

Preliminary *samadhi* experiences ("oneness" with an object of contemplation) are states of consciousness and not the actual realization of absolute, pure consciousness. Samadhi with identification

is "with support" of the object with which awareness relates. Samadhi without identification with an object is nondual awareness which results in the unfoldment of knowledge or may be experienced as conscious awareness of awareness. After these kinds of samadhi experiences the meditator's awareness may again identify with mental conditionings and with delusions and illusions, though not as strongly as before the experiences. What is most desirable is to retain awareness of pure consciousness after meditation and to relate to mind, body, and everyday circumstances with insightful understanding. When permanent, this condition is that of consciously, spontaneously knowing the truth about God and cosmic processes at all times, and is authentic liberation of consciousness.

There are many yogis who are spiritually advanced who have not yet experienced higher samadhi (superconscious) states. Their inner condition may be considered to be superior to that of the average spiritually unwakened person but they still have need of much soul unfoldment before full enlightenment is realized. Also, until all traces of restricting influences rooted in the mind are neutralized or dissolved, even persons who are able to enjoy tranquil superconscious states during meditation or who are reasonably functional in everyday situations, need to continue their regimens of self-analysis and explore more refined superconscious states if they are to remove all subtle causes of possible future discontent. Remember, the aspiration of a dedicated disciple on the enlightenment path is full awakening in God. Lesser degrees of unfoldment, while revealing and life-supportive, are but stages of spiritual growth and not the final destination.

Soul Contentment During Circumstantial Changes

During a public lecture Paramahansaji once said, "The yogi stands unshaken amidst the crash of bursting worlds!" An emphatic statement to make a point, to be sure. But for one established in Self-realization, it is true.

While it is unlikely that we will have to confront planetary catastrophe in our current era, every person does have to confront challenging circumstances from time to time. How we respond when

challenged is a measure of our spiritual awareness. We may exhibit "saintly" qualities when circumstances are harmonious, and become completely irrational and emotionally distraught in the face of unexpected or unwanted threats to our mental peace, lifestyle, or personal security.

Appropriate response to challenge, when necessary to participate in adjusting circumstances so they are supportive, is always in order. Panic, mental depression, or radical behavior in the face of challenge is always self-defeating and damaging—as one may already know from personal experience.

Here is something to remember: When we are established in soul consciousness and awareness of the fact that the universe is supportive of us, we can live without fear because we will always be provided for. I do not recommend praying for protection because the very impulse to do so indicates anxiety and lack of faith in the fullness of God here and now.

What about the future, and various prophecies of difficulties to come? I look to the source of the propaganda and see that most who indulge in negative assessments of our future on Planet Earth are fearful individuals who are deficient in knowledge.

One hundred thirty-three years ago (in 1861) Mahavatar Babaji initiated Lahiri Mahasaya into the practices of Kriya Yoga and affirmed that the time was right for these teachings to go forth to a spiritually awakening world. One hundred years ago (in 1894), at Babaji's request Sri Yukteswar wrote and published a small book (*The Holy Science)* in which he concisely explained the reasons for the rise and fall of cycles of civilization. I have commented on Sri Yukteswar's information in several of my books over the years. According to present information, we are in the 294th year of the ascending second subcycle, the one during which human beings are able to discover and utilize subtle natural forces (electricity, magnetism, and the potential of the atom) and during which rapid spiritual growth is occurring.

Contrary to the opinions of some people who seem to never tire of talking about the Dark Age—which they say still prevails but which, in fact, ceased near the end of 1700 of our current era—we are moving in the direction of a radically transformed world condition: and presently but 294 years into the current ascending (and,

therefore, improving) cycle which will continue for another 2100 years before the ascending Mental Age begins. That era of 3600 years will see a large percentage of earth's human inhabitants functioning with highly developed mental powers and perhaps 50 percent of them being highly spiritually advanced. The era of 4800 years which follows the Mental Age will be one of universal brotherhood, with at least 75 percent of the human population highly Self-realized. So we should not be responsive to doom and gloom talk, nor live with uncertainty or fear.

The cosmic changes which occur on a regular schedule in relationship to our planet are due to the movements of the sun and its planets through the galaxy and the angle of the earth's axis in relationship to the sun. Twenty-four thousand year cycles occur with subcycles as mentioned above which result in two 12,000 year cycles within the longer 24,000 year cycle. These affect the faculties of perception in human beings. Earth's position (it's tilt on it's axis) in relationship to the sun is believed by some scientists to result in periodic Ice Ages which radically change the surface conditions of the planet, as well as provide opportunity for its renewal. The sun's passage through space brings the solar system into regions where meteorites and comets are more commonly moving, which represents a random challenge because of the possibility of minor or major impacts.

A major challenge now being faced is that of a rapidly growing human population which strains the planet's natural resources and contributes to excessive atmospheric, air, earth, and water pollution. The present human population of approximately 6 billion persons is expected to increase by another billion within ten years and grow to perhaps 14 billion by the year 2050 if trends continue as they have over the past several decades. Most of the population increase is occurring in parts of the world where societal conditions are undeveloped and people are largely uneducated. Improvement of living standards and better education has been found to result in a slowing of population growth in regions of the world where these conditions become more influential.

Collective human consciousness is influenced by the mental states and states of consciousness of individuals. Because of this, improvement of intellectual abilities, self-responsible behaviors, and inten-

tional endeavors to facilitate spiritual growth by each person contributes to the overall clarity and wellness of the collective consciousness of the planet. Each person, therefore, has a useful and important role to play in the drama of life. Kriya Yoga practices not only quicken personal spiritual evolution, but also on a subtle level beneficially influence planetary consciousness by inviting more refined, superconscious influences into the realm of mind and matter. Spiritually advanced persons can also beneficially influence global circumstances by intentionally "seeing" constructive outcomes and working in practical ways to educate and assist others. To render the most effective service it is best for us to first attend to our own spiritual wellness and then to act as directed by our innate knowledge and common sense. Merely to endeavor to rearrange outer circumstances without being grounded in spiritual understanding is to work at a surface level without producing worthwhile or lasting results. As with individuals, so with our extended human family—as individuals become more spiritually aware and functional, so all people in this and other realms benefit in every way.

The Kriya Yoga Tradition as a Means for the Transmission of Truth and Grace

A *tradition* transmits ideas, customs, behaviors, and precepts (teachings) from one generation to another. The Kriya Yoga tradition makes possible an additional benefit: that of the transmission of the current of spiritual force that vitalizes the tradition and imparts blessing-grace to initiates.

If we only shared information, as useful as valid information is for our general welfare, our tradition would be devoid of life, as are many existing religious and cultural traditions through which the letter of the law but not the Spirit is conveyed. I am aware that many people who are offered an opportunity to be instructed and initiated into Kriya Yoga practices do not comprehend the inner essence of our work. They see it is one more teaching among many that may or may not be useful for them to learn about. They may think, "I'll study it for a while to satisfy my curiosity or to see if there is anything of value in it." Or, "I've tried many other teachings, I might as well try this one." Even so, if they will apply even a

little of what they learn, they will benefit. But if they have the intellectual capacity to comprehend the philosophical principles, and the spiritual capacity to give themselves wholeheartedly to attentive practices, they will experience exceptional spiritual growth as a result of their personal endeavors and increasing expressions of grace in their lives.

This tradition is *alive!* Unlike teaching traditions from which spiritual vitality has faded because of an absence of enlightened participants, our work is empowered by the Spirit of God because of the compassionate involvement of our line of gurus and the dedicated practices of thousands of initiate disciples.

By "our work" I mean the Kriya Yoga movement itself, which includes many branches besides the one of which I am the present director-guru. Mahavatar Babaji inspires and influences many spiritual masters and saints in the Kriya Yoga tradition as well as others. Some of Lahiri Mahasaya's disciples were empowered by him to initiate truth seekers and that branch is still influential. Sri Yukteswar empowered a few of his disciples whose services have blessed many to this day. Of Sri Yukteswar's disciples, the one whose destiny it was to be the vehicle through whom Kriya Yoga would be spread throughout the world, was my guru Paramahansa Yogananda. Paramahansaji's role was destined, as affirmed by Babaji in conversations with Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar. Several of his disciples were also destined to play active roles. During a private talk with Master, in 1950, he told me, "You have been with me before. You are here, as some others are, to assist me with this work." I had known that in my mind and felt it in my heart (soul) before he told me, and it was satisfying to hear his words of affirmation.

Babaji's role is to assist humanity in the direction of spiritual growth during this present several thousand year evolutionary cycle. In our tradition the emphasis is upon individual spiritual awakening and practices to facilitate illumination of consciousness rather than upon mass public endeavors. There is value, of course, in occasional group gatherings for the purpose of sharing information and providing support on the awakening path, but the more transformative work occurs within the individual who is steadfastly devoted to God and who lives a simple, balanced, God-conscious life.

For responsiveness to the blessing-grace which flows through

our tradition, remain mentally and spiritually attuned with the line of gurus while looking to God as the source of grace and the provider of all blessings. The gurus share their illumined consciousness, spiritual forces, and prayerful influences, always directing the attention of initiate disciples to God. When we are mentally and spiritually attuned to our line of gurus, we experience a direct transmission of creative force (*shakti*) which enlivens our soul forces and empowers us to live with more focused purpose.

The creative forces that are awakened within us are manifestations of our innate spiritual essence (*kundalini*, "dormant power-potential"). Awakening occurs when we are ready to experience spiritual growth in the course of our evolutionary unfoldment: because of our personal endeavors, aspiration for spiritual growth, prayer, and God's grace. With inner awakening, our spiritual growth progress is more steady and rapid. Without it, ordinary self-conscious life usually prevails. As Kriya Yoga initiates we are called to more than ordinary self-conscious experience: we are called to commit to right living, spiritual practice, and compassionate service so that everything we do is chosen by us to bear witness to our dedicated discipleship resolve.

Addendum

DISCIPLESHIP AS A TOTAL LIFESTYLE

Discipleship is not a part-time practice: it is an every-moment commitment to skillful living and spiritual growth. Otherwise, our professed dedication to want to awaken to Self-realization and to know and live consciously in God is a empty claim. Discipleship is for persons who are sincere in their aspiration to live, not as mere self-conscious creatures, but as soul-awake, ever-learning and spiritually growing devotees of God.

It is essential that we be informed, that we provide for ourselves all useful knowledge that can contribute to our ability to live effectively and facilitate soul unfoldment. For this, read the various books mentioned in this issue of *Radiance* and which will be featured in future issues. Some book titles are listed on the forum participation form provided. Among them, the reprint of the first edition of Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* will be of interest. It represents his initial offering of that book—subsequent editions of which have been somewhat revised. Of course it is good to read the current edition also, which is published by the Self-Realization Fellowship which Paramahansaji founded in the 1920s.

To review your practice of the basic Kriya Yoga meditation techniques, request a copy of our audio tape which I recorded for this purpose. Also, when possible, attend Kriya initiation services either here at the CSA Retreat Center when they are offered or when I visit your community, to improve your knowledge of the procedures and renew your discipleship commitment.

If you know Kriya Yoga initiates who are not yet aware of this publication, let them know of its availability. The *Radiance* forum is for all Kriya Yoga initiates, including those who may have been initiated by a qualified person other than me.

If you were initiated by me, and are not presently a CSA supporting member, consider becoming one. Your involvement and participation will more fully confirm your commitment to this path and

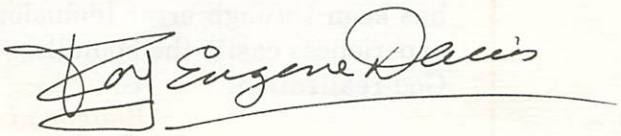
greatly assist in the spread of the work.

One of the reasons for the slow but progressive unfoldment of the Kriya Yoga movement, since its introduction in India by Babaji in 1861 and in the West by Paramahansaji in 1920, is that not all initiates have been supportive of outreach endeavors. True, the Kriya path is an inner one, but it is also important to make the teachings available to others who might benefit from them. There are two ways to do this: (1) live the principles, and by so doing, be a positive example to others and a conduit through which grace can flow; (2) help to make possible the dissemination of the teachings. One of the most effective means of communication is the printed word. A direct way to assist in the dissemination of the teachings is to financially support our ministry endeavors, especially our publishing programs. Another way is to pass literature on to interested persons, allowing them the privacy and freedom to respond as they feel led. Ours is not the way of confrontational endeavors to persuade, but to make information available so that seeking souls can have a point-of-contact that may be of lasting value to them.

We need not be overly concerned about our personal welfare or our relationship to the Infinite when we are dedicated on the path. Thus dedicated, we are supported by *dharma* (the upholding force pervading the universe) and provided for by God's grace. Because of this we can live without fear as we continue to learn, grow, and awaken in God.

One late evening, in early 1950, Master (Paramahansaji) walked from his car to the elevator in the lower hallway of the SRF headquarters building. I happened to be there and he spoke with me for a few minutes. His final words were, "You have a wonderful future, Roy."

To you, who are intent upon the Kriya Yoga path, I say: You, too, have a wonderful future!



Note: We have received several requests for photographs of the guru line. Availability of these will be announced in the next issue of *Radiance*.

Light on the Path

When the mind is disciplined and one is established in realization of the true Self and is liberated from all desires, one is said to be harmonized in [meditation] practice.

As the flame of a lamp in a windless place does not flicker, like such is the mind of a self-controlled meditator.

In that state is supreme joy, perceived by the intellect and transcending the senses, therein established the devotee no longer falls away from realization.

Having that supreme perception beyond which there is no greater gain, one is firmly established and is not disturbed by even the darkest sorrow.

Let this be known as Self-realization.

It should be maintained, without faltering and without regret [for past circumstances].

Whatever tempts the mind to waver, let it be discarded or transcended, with attention focused on the Supreme Reality.

For the highest happiness unfolds for that person whose instinctual impulses and desires are at rest, whose consciousness is clear, and who has realized the true Self. In this way, the devotee who has seen through error [delusions and illusions] experiences easily the boundless bliss of supreme God-realization.

– Bhagavad Gita, chapter six

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

October – December 1994 Number 2

Light on the Path

THE FLOW OF KNOWLEDGE AND GRACE

In our line of transmission, the gurus are Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, direct disciples of Paramahansaji whom he ordained to represent the tradition, and their qualified representatives. The source of grace is God.

Discipleship

TOTAL COMMITMENT, COMPLETE SURRENDER

Initiation is only the beginning on the spiritual path. It is what we do after initiation that determines our spiritual progress. The Kriya Yoga path is much more than merely being devotional and giving some time to meditation. It is the way of alert attention given to right living so that soul abilities are awakened and wisely used. It is the way of total commitment to the path and complete surrender in God.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Open discussion with initiates to provide meaningful answers to relevant questions and clear explanations of the principles and practices. Participation encouraged.

Publisher's Note

This publication is produced quarterly for initiate disciples of the Kriya Yoga tradition. Most readers were initiated by me, but individuals who were initiated by another ordained representative of the guru line of Mahavatar Babaji through to Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors, are welcome to be included.

Because this information is for initiates of the Kriya Yoga tradition, please keep it confidential. You may, of course, share *Radiance* with others you may know who are also Kriya initiates. If you know someone who is interested in learning about this path, refer that person to a qualified source for instruction so they can have the opportunity to know about it.

If you are a Kriya Yoga initiate and a brother or sister disciple on the path has shared this issue of *Radiance* with you, you are cordially invited to use the information at the bottom of this page to subscribe for yourself.

Regular readers: please use the form mailed with each issue to participate in the forum dialogue section of the magazine. Your questions or comments will be useful in helping me know of your needs and interests, and helpful to other readers who may benefit from the information.

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THE CONTINUING FLOW OF KNOWLEDGE AND GRACE

For thousands of years the light of higher knowledge has been transmitted to seeking souls through the agency of enlightened personages, although not all such individuals perform a formal teaching role. Just the same, where there is light, it will be apparent, and will have an effective influence on its environment.

One through whom higher knowledge flows can rightly be referred to as a guru: a "teacher" if only by example, whose illumined state tends to transform and elevate the consciousness of human beings and to harmonize the field of nature.

The Sanskrit word *guru* means "the light that dispels heaviness or darkness." In India, the word is commonly used to refer to one's teacher of secular subjects. Among adherents of yoga, the word is sometimes prefaced with *Sat* (truth) to indicate that one's spiritual mentor is a "truth revealer." Not everyone who is said to be a satguru, really is. A person cannot be a satguru if higher knowledge is not realized, nor can one be designated as a satguru except by another satguru who recognizes one's spiritually awakened state and chooses to acknowledge it.

Remember, *guru* in ordinary, secular circumstances simply means teacher. *Satguru* means one through whom transformative energies flow, along with knowledge. The gurus in our Kriya Yoga lineage are satgurus: more than sharers of information, they are agents of beneficial change. Illumined, therefore selfless, they freely serve humanity's highest good.

Paramahansaji often said, "I am not the guru. God is the guru. I am but his servant." He played his destined outer role, while inwardly knowing God as the doer of all worthwhile actions.

Yet, knowing that the average devotee could not, during early stages of spiritual practice, sense an awareness of the presence of

God with certainty, he counseled that we should learn to become mentally and spiritually attuned to him and our line of gurus. He sometimes counseled me, "Tune in with me, Roy. When you are in tune with the gurus, you are in tune with God."

He never suggested that anyone should, or could, be placed between the devotee and God: only that reverent attunement with a God-realized soul could be a point-of-contact with God until God was directly known by the devotee.

Cherishing the Destined Guru-Disciple Relationship

I have heard people say, "I don't need a guru; I can go direct to the source!" I've never known anyone who talked like that actually go to the source. Usually their talk is mere conversation, contrived to conceal their insecurity or defend their ego.

Some "teachers" assert that truth seekers in a Western culture are more independent and self-willed than their brothers and sisters with Eastern cultural conditionings and, therefore, need a way to self-discovery and God-knowledge that does not demand discipleship or emphasis upon subjectivity. But there is no assurance of psychological transformation without willingness to learn (which is what it means to be a disciple) and without an exploration of the inner side of life. It must be acknowledged, however, that ego-fixation is not confined to people of the West; nor is arrogance, a sometimes overt projection of self-centeredness.

The guru-disciple relationship is destined. A seeker of truth is led to the contact which is most suitable for the unfoldment of his or her highest good. In this matter, Higher Intelligence does not make any mistakes. Once the relationship is established, it remains until the disciple awakens completely in God, whether within a few years or a few or many incarnations. This is why one who feels led to have a guru should pray for guidance, so that the destined contact is made. And why, when the relationship is established and is recognized as being authentic, the disciple is advised to remain true to it. If it happens that the disciple's guru is not incarnated or is unavailable because of circumstances which cannot be changed, the disciple may be taught by another knowledgeable representative of their tradi-

tion. In some instances, when no guru or guru-representative is accessible on the planet, one may learn from a teacher of another enlightenment tradition.

One of the questions a guru should ask a person who is seeking guidance on the discipleship path is: Do you already have a guru? If the answer is yes, the seeker may be asked to stay with that relationship. If this is not possible, the seeker should be told that instruction and help will be given, but that they should inwardly remain attuned to their own tradition. It is understood that attunement with one's destined way is superior to the occasionally observed behavior of truth seekers who seem to derive pleasure from their many, but superficial, relationships. While being true to our known way, we can honor all authentic enlightenment traditions and appreciate the constructive works of all knowledgeable, selfless teachers and gurus.

Sometimes a sincere seeker whose powers of discernment are not yet developed will be attracted to a teacher or teaching which is not the one of their destiny. With the dawning of soul discernment, this error will be recognized and can be corrected. An axiom (proverb) in some esoteric traditions is thus stated: "The seeker gets the teacher he or she deserves at their level of spiritual development." This does not mean that everyone attracts the circumstances they need, only that one is inclined to be drawn into a relationship which corresponds to one's inner states of consciousness.

Some years ago a young man visited the CSA retreat center and told me of how he was led here. Two or three years earlier, he was initiated into meditation practices by a person who was then promoted as being "the world teacher" with special knowledge and unique teachings. Some benefit was derived from the instruction received and from the practice of meditation techniques that were taught. The man soon noticed, however, the behind-the-scenes actions of the organization's leaders and discovered that, while the teachings were basically valid, the motives of the leaders were self-serving and the promotion methods used to spread the work were chosen to project a false image of spiritual value and to "merchandise" the teachings rather than serve the real needs of devotees.

He also learned that some of the meditation techniques, which he had been told were their exclusive methods, were freely available

to anyone willing to investigate more extensively. After recovering from his feelings of disappointment, he was attracted to our tradition and settled into a program of intentional, self-responsible living and focused spiritual practices. Several years passed, during which he reported satisfactory progress. Then, during an interlude of personal domestic and business challenge, and "feeling" a need for a more intimate teacher-student relationship, he affiliated with another tradition and its practices. The last time I saw him he was still devoted to the spiritual path but was also still the victim of his emotional needs. As a result, he was more responsive to following the "guidance" of his whims rather than that of his innate wisdom.

Many spiritual traditions stress the practical value of the redemptive influence of the transmission of the teachings and the flow of God's grace through a line of enlightened teachers or truth-revealing gurus. Especially is this so in the yoga tradition. In our lineage, Mahavatar Babaji is acknowledged as the illumined master who restored Kriya Yoga teachings to their essential purposes and, through Lahiri Mahasaya, offered them to truth seekers in all walks of life.

Babaji (*baba*, father, and *ji*, honored, respected) has been on the planet in a physical body for several centuries and dwells in secluded regions of the Himalayan Mountains in northern India. Paramahansaji, and some disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, said that Babaji periodically regenerated his body and has affirmed that he will remain identified with this planet for thousands of years, to assist its inhabitants to grow spiritually and to support evolutionary processes. Being fully enlightened, Babaji's consciousness is not confined to our planet or to the physical universe. All realms, from the field of God through celestial, causal, astral, and physical realms are freely accessible to him.

In recent years, several "teachers" and writers have claimed direct contact with Babaji: some asserting that Babaji appeared to them in physical form, or in a vision or a dream, instructing them to teach on his behalf. None of these claims or assertions are true, although they may be believed by the persons who make these statements.

I know of four persons, three based in India and one in North America, who profess to be (or to have been) in personal communication with Mahavatar Babaji. They advertise classes and books for

the purpose of teaching "the authentic Kriya Yoga" of Mahavatar Babaji, attracting many seekers who are responsive to the appeal. They also say that Paramahansaji diluted Kriya Yoga teachings to make them more acceptable to his Western disciples and students. Their assertions are not based on the facts. Having had the opportunity to personally be with Paramahansaji, I know that he taught disciples according to their capacity to receive—from the most basic procedures to the more advanced and subtle. Within a few weeks after I met him (on December 23, 1949, in Los Angeles, California) I received the transmission of spiritual power from him which awakened my dormant soul forces and more completely opened my awareness to inner plane perceptions. Several other disciples of his became spiritually advanced souls, some awakening to full God-realization.

A guru's major function is to assist disciples to Self-knowledge and liberation of consciousness. At a gathering of disciples in the early 1950s Paramahansaji revealed: "Many who are here on this day will attain the state of jivanmukta, and some will be siddhas."

Jiva is a Sanskrit word for "soul," and *mukti* means "freedom" or liberation from delusions and illusions. A jivanmukta is a soul which is Self-realized while still embodied. *Siddhi* means "perfection." A *siddha* is a fully enlightened soul with no attachments of any kind to subtle or gross aspects of mind or nature.

Paramahansaji attracted casual truth seekers who were looking for partial improvement in their lives, sincere disciples who were capable of more insightful understanding, and devotees of God who were willing and able to awaken completely from "the dream of mortality." He worked with individuals at all levels of conditioned consciousness while being ever alert to notice the few among the many who were able to devote themselves to practices which could accelerate their spiritual growth. To casual truth seekers, he appeared to be a nice and wise man. To sincere disciples, he was a caring father-mother-teacher-guru who counseled and encouraged. To more awake devotees, he revealed his full knowledge and reality and assisted them to Self-knowledge and liberation of consciousness. I experienced him directly as he was, as an avatar of love, knowledge, and revealing grace.

In referring to Paramahansaji as an avatar, I do not mean to suggest that he was a unique incarnation of the fullness of God; that

is, an exception among enlightened teachers. Rather, his intellectual and spiritual powers were unrestricted so that the reality of God was expressed through his mind and being.

To discerning devotees, my guru would sometimes quietly say, "If you will allow me to do so, I will reveal God to you." Such words can only be honestly spoken by one who is fully God-realized.

The Unbroken Line of Gurus in the Kriya Yoga Tradition

In our tradition, the sharing of the teachings in their purity and the transmission of spiritual force that is soul-awakening, continues through the guru line. Sometimes organized movements are created for the purpose of making the teachings available to a larger number of truth seekers, but the inner work always occurs because of the guru-disciple relationship. It occasionally happens that a guru departs from this world without publicly appointing a qualified successor. This occurred when Paramahansaji made his transition (on March 7, 1952).

Privately, Master [I will sometimes refer to my guru as Master, which most of his disciples did when he was physically with us] informed certain disciples of their spiritual responsibility to assist others to liberation of consciousness. On at least one occasion that I know of, when asked if some of his spiritually advanced disciples had disciples, he said, "Of course, they must have!"

When he ordained me (in late autumn, 1951) he pronounced: "Teach as I have taught! Heal as I have healed! Initiate devotees of God into the practice of Kriya Yoga!" His words were precise and emphatic. To a male disciple who observed my ordination and immediately questioned Master's instruction to me about initiating others into Kriya Yoga practices, our guru replied: "You also do it! The same God who is in me, is in you. What I have done, you should do!"

He did not say, "You teach the outer message and leave the inner work to me." Speaking to me as my guru he charged me with the responsibility to represent him and the guru line. His instruction to me was not lightly given.

At the time of Paramahansaji passing, there was no disciple then

ready to be named as his guru-successor as head of his Self-Realization Fellowship organization. The disciple perhaps best qualified was James J. Lynn, whom Paramahansaji named as the next president of SRF at the conclusion of a Kriya Yoga initiation service in 1951. At that time he also conferred upon Mr. Lynn the "spiritual name" of Rajasi Janakananda. Mr. Lynn a wealthy business man who resided in Kansas City, had met Master in the early 1930s and wholeheartedly responded to this path. He experienced rapid soul unfoldment, awakening to the jivanmukta stage in but a few years, so Master said.

Mr. Lynn still had major business responsibilities at the time of Master's passing. Shortly afterward, he withdrew from business involvements and moved to southern California, where he made his transition in 1955. Faye Wright (Sister Daya Mata), a close disciple of Paramahansaji for many years, was then chosen by the board of directors to serve as president of SRF. She has honorably and successfully guided its activities to the present time.

Shortly after the start of Mr. Lynn's term as president of SRF, he assured his brother and sister disciples that he had no intention of assuming the role of guru, saying, "Master, Paramahansaji, will always be our guru." It was characteristic of him, with his humble, devotional nature, that he shared his feelings about the matter in this way. His words also served to reassure disciples of the SRF monastic community. They could be confident that their routines would continue as before and that their devotion to Paramahansaji—their guru—would be supported.

In subsequent published announcements, it has been stated that it is to be understood by all disciples of Paramahansaji and members of the organization he founded, that he is to be acknowledged as the last in the line of the organization's gurus. This statement has caused confusion in the minds of many who are devoted to this path.

If Paramahansaji was, indeed, the last in his line of gurus, does it mean that his endeavors to awaken souls failed? Does it mean that there are no embodied successors to carry on the work—to effectively transmit the teachings and the flow of God's grace through the guru line? Does it mean that there are a few who are qualified to be agents of grace but who are refusing to accept the role?

Note that the published statement refers to the guru line of the

organization. This allows for guru lines branching out from Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar—which are not directly affiliated with SRF—to be acknowledged as a continuing process, which is consistent with yogic teachings and a core tenet of this enlightenment tradition. But devotees who are attracted to Paramahansaji are encouraged to think in terms of his writings as their guru, or be inspired to endeavor to telepathically or spiritually communicate with his mind and consciousness—a difficult task for all but highly spiritually advanced souls! This creates a serious, almost insurmountable challenge for most truth seekers.

It is a situation that often results in the self-delusion that one is being supported and "guided" from the inner planes by Paramahansaji and/or the other gurus in our line. Or, as sometimes happens, an undiscerning devotee will be attracted to individuals who claim to "channel" (a form of presumed mediumship) Paramahansaji's words and "vibrations" to make them available to seekers. A more common situation is that a sincere devotee settles into the habit of being complacent in the imagined relationship with Paramahansaji and the guru line: a relationship that may not exist in fact. Or, if it does because of the eternal guru disciple relationship, it does not provide for personal teaching to the disciple. Thus, illusion prevails and little good results from their otherwise sincere devotion. Some benefit may be experienced, however, as a result of right living and attentive spiritual practice, including meditation.

I have met many people who profess to love Paramahansaji and to be dedicated on the spiritual path, who are not responsive to practical advice that I might offer [only if they request it] because they prefer their fantasy to that of forthright information and common sense guidance. "You may be right," is a frequent response to my words, "but I prefer to follow my heart." By "heart" they mean their emotions, not their true essence, their soul nature.

To my knowledge, I am the only embodied, direct disciple of Paramahansaji who is willing to fulfill the responsibilities of a guru in this lineage. There were one or two others, but they made their transition a few years ago. All other embodied disciples of whom I have knowledge are either reluctant to be gurus or they point to Paramahansaji as the last in our line. As to my role as guru to some kriya yoga disciples: it is always explained that I am but standing in for the gurus and the disciple's attention and devotion is always

directed to God. While respect in the relationship is essential, I do not encourage or allow emotional dependency upon me or the tradition.

If it were true that the guru line that blossomed in the 20th century because of Master's realizations and works had come to an end, a few decades from now when the last of his direct disciples are gone from this earth plane, all that would remain would be his writings and the stories that are told about him. The writings will still have value and stories about him will inspire, but what about the life, the power, the grace? What about the needs of individuals who are ready for spiritual quickening, and who are drawn to our line of gurus but can find no realistic connection?

For devotees who are content with social and spiritual fellowship only, who derive comfort from membership in a group which is dedicated to high ideals, or are satisfied to receive remnants of teachings from leaders who are neither God-realized nor possessed of keen intellectual powers, affiliation with a body of "true believers" will satisfy them—for a while. But to hope that faith in spiritual masters who are no longer on the earth plane will take the place of personal contact with a guru is to be naive and, eventually, disappointed.

Grace always flows from God, of course, and is available to anyone who is responsive to it. But for personal transmission of helpful information, for caring support when needed, and for initiation into lifestyle practices and meditation procedures, an embodied guru is invaluable. Gurus serve as contemporary front-line representatives of the ancient tradition. They have no emotional needs to satisfy, nor are they impelled by self-centered compulsions to be of service. Nor are they interested in personal fame or material gain. Their only function is to remain inwardly established in God-realization and to share knowledge and experience of God with others. They have no new teaching although they may adapt teaching methods to suit the needs of the times: always without compromising the message or the emphasis. They teach the timeless way of repentance, commitment, and intentional right living and spiritual practice.

Some guru lines do die out, not because an enlightened guru decides to terminate it, but because none of their disciples are sufficiently qualified to carry on the tradition and transmit the spiritual current. Let it be known that Paramahansa Yogananda's mission to the world spans the centuries. Therefore, for many centuries yet to

unfold, there will be guru representatives to offer Kriya Yoga teachings and initiation opportunities to all who are prepared to benefit from them. Mahavatar Babaji would not have decreed that Master begin his public work if were not destined to be successful.

With a teaching emphasis of this potency, we are relating to a vital spiritual force that has been influential in assisting thousands of people to spiritual growth and which, in the future, will be influential in assisting countless millions of souls to illumination of consciousness. Our work is not in competition with other useful spiritual education and soul awakening activities. The currents of evolution are today moving powerfully through many channels (through people, institutions, and nature's processes) to contribute to mass spiritual awakening and world harmony. What is important is that we discover our destined relationships and fulfill our purposes with excellence. While we may not always share the views of others who are dedicated to their respective callings, we can have our disagreements without being judgmental or mean-spirited.

Master always stressed the practical, spiritual value of demonstrating compassion and soul friendship in every relationship. One of his favorite, and frequent, comments was, "The world is a big place, and there is room enough for everyone in it." About sincere teachers of other religious or philosophical traditions, he would say, "They are doing wonderful work. God needs many willing helpers through whom to accomplish his purposes." While steadfast in his convictions, he freely gave his blessings to those who were, likewise, following their own soul guidance.

TOTAL COMMITMENT, COMPLETE SURRENDER

When Paramahansa Yogananda accepted me as his disciple, he asked, "Will you do as I say?" To which I responded, "Yes, Sir."

When Sri Yukteswar accepted Paramahansaji for discipleship training, he said, "Allow me to discipline you." In telling of that occasion Master would explain the importance of obedience to the guru regarding matters relating to psychological transformation, spiritual growth, and appropriate behaviors and actions. About Sri Yukteswar, he said, "My guru could have had a huge following, so wise was he, but many could not accept his strict training."

Lahiri Mahasaya carefully selected those whom he would agree to initiate into Kriya Yoga practices. Seekers had to be sincere and self-responsible. If they were not regular in their meditation practices, he would express his displeasure. Until they had acquired an expected degree of proficiency in practice of preliminary meditation techniques, he would not teach them the more advanced procedures. If a disciple was not living an honest, ethical life, or was not fulfilling family or social obligations, Lahiri would instruct them in matters of morality and duty. He told new initiate disciples, "Do not make a show of being a devotee. Practice Kriya meditation in the privacy of your home. Let your light shine as the result of your inner realizations."

Readers of Master's autobiography will remember the chapter in which the first meeting of Mahavatar Babaji and Lahiri Mahasaya is told. To Lahiri's request that he be permitted to initiate others, who, like himself, had a secular lifestyle—with family relationships and work and community responsibilities—Babaji at first refused his permission to do so. Finally, he agreed that Lahiri could initiate

others if they were willing to be totally committed to God.

What Babaji actually said was, "Before you initiate a person, be sure that person is honest. Instruct new Kriya disciples to give everything to God, including family and personal possessions."

How do we "give everything to God?" We do it by renouncing any personal claim to anyone or anything. We may remain in relationship and we may continue to have and use the things of this world, but while we live a responsible life we understand that every person (at the innermost core) is divine, and that things and resources are only ours to use, not to possess. The instruction about giving everything to God is to taken literally and adhered to, because doing so instantly frees us from bondage to the delusion that we are beings independent of Higher Reality.

A common grievance of many spiritual aspirants is that of not experiencing the personal improvement and spiritual growth they hoped to experience when they began their studies and spiritual practices. They sometimes say, "I'm doing almost all of the things I'm supposed to be doing and I'm not making progress!" Yes, they may be following the guidelines precisely, but one character flaw may persist: that of choosing to remain self-centered and small-minded.

Self-centeredness is commonly characterized by provincialism: (*provincial*: of a province, region, or locality). A provincial mind-set is usually the result of limited experience and imagination. It confines awareness, preventing its enlargement. When we blindly adhere to learned or acquired opinions, beliefs, and behaviors because they are the ones we share in common with others who are similarly habit-bound or prejudiced, our mental attitude is provincial. We may do this to be complacently comfortable with circumstances as they are, because we are resistant to change, or because our convictions provide us a sense of security, of being in control of ourselves. We may then prefer the predictable routines dictated by habit rather than learn new ways of doing things which require courage to learn and grow. Most attempts to unfold soul awareness are then met with frustration because one is, to use an analogy, endeavoring to "put new wine in old, unclean bottles." One may hope to mix God-conscious states with conditioned states of consciousness, or awaken to Self-realization while clinging to restrictive behaviors and relationships. We sometimes hear the statement: "I don't want to have to

change the way I think or the way I do things, I just want to be enlightened!"

To paraphrase the wryly humorous, pointedly illustrative words attributed to Jesus: It is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than it is for a person addicted to his or her objects of attachment to awaken to realization of the fullness of God.

Objects of attachment are not always material things: they are often our beliefs, mental states, emotional states, and behaviors. The primary attachment, the basic cause of all others, is the delusion (erroneous belief) that one is a physical creature, rather than a spiritual being expressing through a physical body. With delusion, illusions (errors in perception) follow. Soul awareness then becomes fixated, firmly identified with, mental and physical characteristics and environmental conditions. One then may become protective, or vigorously defensive, of their situation even when, deep down, they know better.

A tendency to be attached to ideas, beliefs, sensations, personal relationships, or circumstances that provide a degree of security, comfort, or pleasure is characteristic of the deluded state of consciousness. Not being sufficiently aware of our innate spiritual qualities or of our relationship with God, we tend to identify with whatever seems to provide us a degree of satisfaction. The opposite inclination, aversion, causes us to want to be removed from conditions which are unpleasant or painful, or which may interfere with our desire to have personal circumstances remain as they are. It is natural, when we are healthy-minded, to want to avoid pain-causing circumstances and to prefer those conditions and relationships which allow us to be comfortable, healthy, and happy. When psychologically disturbed, one's natural instincts may be perverted, causing one to be attracted to circumstances and relationships which are self-limiting, painful, and destructive.

Spiritual aspirants who are psychologically healthy find it easy to choose a simple, natural lifestyle that is supportive of their idealized purposes and spiritual growth. They welcome knowledge and all that assists them to soul freedom. Individuals who are psychologically disturbed may intentionally or unconsciously refuse to help themselves to wellness and spiritual growth, and resist all attempts of others to help them. They "love darkness," preferring it to the light of knowledge.

Qualities Helpful to Success on the Discipleship Path

Two essentials for discipleship are *total commitment* to the path and *complete surrender* to necessary psychological transformations and spiritual growth processes. Indecision and resistance to growth are equally self-defeating. Some other personal qualities helpful to success on the discipleship path are:

- *Willingness and Capacity to Learn.* Unless one has a learning disability, or is unintelligent, all that is required is willingness to learn. Even if intellectual skills are lacking when one begins to study and practice, if sincere desire to learn is impelling, progress can be satisfactory. One can be taught at his or her level of receptivity, and lifestyle routines can be implemented which will nurture wellness, effective function, and spiritual growth. Mental perversity, the neurotic, self-defeating habit of distorting information to perpetuate self-centered purposes, is an obstacle to learning and Self-actualization.

- *Willingness and Ability to Apply What is Learned.* Knowledge must be applied if it is to be verified by experience. We can take on faith the teachings of wise people, and prove or disprove the teaching by testing what we learn in the fires of daily application. A healthy curiosity is helpful to this end. Also useful is a dispassionate approach: being sincerely interested while being able to remain somewhat objective, as a scientist or researcher of facts should be. Even if enthusiasm wanes now and then, a most beneficial approach is that of doing what should be done as duty, as a necessary action. Right living is supportive of success. This is why saints often advise: "Do as I recommend, and discover for yourself what the results will be."

- *Devotion to God.* Paramahansaji proclaimed that devotion to God was more important than knowledge and practice of meditation techniques. Both, he said, provide the disciple full opportunity to be successful on the enlightenment path. Even if one has no understanding—or no mental concept—of God, devotion to knowing the highest truth about life will be a compelling influence. Love of God

is a magnetic, attracting force that dissolves ego boundaries and restores soul awareness to realization of wholeness. Love of truth inspires interest in learning and awakens innate knowledge so that revelations unfold. We attract to ourselves experiences which correspond to our desires. If we are so devoted to God, to truth, that we desire higher knowledge and realizations above all other experiences, we shall have knowledge and we shall awaken in God.

• *Respect for the Teaching of the Enlightenment Tradition.* When an authentic enlightenment tradition is discovered by the devotee, and when it is recognized as being the one to identify with, utmost respect for it and dedication to the ideals it emphasizes should be demonstrated. An *authentic* enlightenment tradition is one which reveals truth and offers ways to Self-realization which have been researched and proven by enlightened representatives of the tradition. If the teachings are valid, and if its representatives are enlightened, compliance with its recommended practices will result in the fulfillment of personal purposes and spiritual growth.

• *Respect for the Teacher or Guru.* The teacher or guru should be seen as God's representative in the guru disciple relationship. While spiritual friendship will certainly be evident, the student or disciple should avoid attempts to cross over the boundaries which define the relationship. The guru's function is to awaken the disciple's soul powers and abilities, not to be an intimate, social companion. The relationship is spoiled if the disciple attempts to influence or control the teacher, resists instruction, or becomes resentful for one reason or another. Sri Yukteswar once remarked, "Many would-be disciples look for a guru made in their own image." Instead of being open to what the guru has to offer—specifically, Self-realization which results in liberation of consciousness—disrespectful disciples will often attempt to convince the guru to accept their faults and allow them to continue in their misguided ways.

A visitor, who was with Paramahansaji, saw a framed photograph of Sri Yukteswar in the room where they were sitting and said, "He looks like a very nice man." Master responded, "He was no man! He was a god!"

Paramahansa Yogananda conducting a special a memorial service in honor of Mahatma Gandhi. *Self-Realization Fellowship Temple, Hollywood, California; circa 1947.*

• *Loyalty to the Path and Steadfastness On It.* While honoring all authentic enlightenment paths, loyalty to one's own is redemptive. The core emphasis of all enlightenment paths is the same—right living and illumination of consciousness—but the methods of teaching may differ and *the spiritual force that flows through the teachers of the tradition is unique to it.* It is often fairly easy to discern the differences in teaching, but the matter of the unique quality of the spiritual force that flows may not be so easily understood.

Some truth seekers investigate a variety of teaching traditions and naively conclude that "they are all the same" because the teachings are so similar. (That is like saying: All men or all women are the same because they have characteristics common to the human condition. Therefore, why not socialize with, or marry, anyone who happens to be conveniently present and agreeable to the relationship?) Outer conditions may be similar, but the quality (or influential powers) of spiritual force which enlivens all enlightenment traditions is not the same. Just as when we first meet certain people we sense an instant rapport and an awareness of trust, so when we come into relationship with our destined enlightenment tradition we intuitively sense that we have found our spiritual home and that our brother and sister disciples are our real family.

When initiated, a more defined connection with the spiritual forces unique to one's enlightenment tradition is established. This represents the subtle, inner relationship that bonds the disciple's consciousness and life with the line of gurus. The flow of spiritual force through an enlightened guru line are like waves of grace which are ever supportive of the disciple's welfare.

God's grace directly nurtures us through the various means provided by nature and expresses from within us when our soul urge to awaken and be actualized becomes pronounced. And, if we are initiates of an authentic enlightenment tradition, grace flows to us from God through its gurus and saints.

Master always encouraged disciples to be determinedly steadfast on the spiritual path. During my last personal conversation with him he admonished: "Don't let your mind be bothered with what others do or do not do! Look neither to the left nor to the right, but look straight ahead, to the goal. You must go all the way in this lifetime, and you can!"

His advice to me is for everyone on the discipleship path.

Dialogue

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are those requested by readers of this publication. Please use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in our quarterly open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of all who peruse these pages.

In most enlightenment traditions the practice of austerities is recommended as a means of facilitating psychological transformation and enabling spiritual growth to unfold. What is meant by such practices and how should one implement them?

Our English word, austere, is derived from Greek *austerios*: hard, bitter. English dictionary definitions include: rigorous, strict, ascetic, and abstemious. Their antonyms or opposites are: undisciplined, permissive, wanton, and indulgent.

The purpose of practicing necessary austerities is to regulate mental and emotional states and behaviors, so that destructive or self-defeating influences are eliminated and entirely constructive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are actualized. Remember, Kriya Yoga emphasizes that constructive actions be chosen over actions which are harmful or purposeless.

Our approach is merely that of focusing on essentials and disregarding nonessentials; of doing what we know to be in our spiritual best interest and refraining from actions which conflict with it. Suppression of urges and persistent desires is not recommended, but regulation of them is. Nonuseful behaviors should be renounced (laid down, put aside, disregarded) in favor of useful behaviors. In this way creative forces are rechanneled and frustration is avoided.

Instead of engaging in idle talk, speak with intention. Instead of thinking, speaking, or communicating by any means irrationally, cultivate the habit of exercising commonsense (innate intelligence) and let wisdom determine your actions.

Do, as duty, everything you know to be for your highest good. Live an ordered life. Awaken early in the morning to pray and meditate. Relate to family and friends in ways which acknowledge and nurture their spiritual qualities as well as your own. Have meaningful purpose for living and fulfill it. Choose your lifestyle so that it is *completely* supportive of your purposes, including that of experiencing satisfying spiritual growth. Choose to eat only foods which are natural and nourishing.

Instead of thinking too much about self-denial (of avoiding that which is not good for you), think in terms of Self-realization. Be so focused on fulfilling your worthwhile purposes that you have little or no time or inclination for anything else. I am not referring to being compulsive, but to being clearly resolved and intentional.

Kriyas, actions, should be chosen which effectively eliminate all physical and mental obstacles to healthy-minded, creative, functional living and spiritual growth. Whatever you know to be detrimental to your well-being, psychological health, wholesome personal fulfillment, success in worthwhile endeavors, and spiritual growth, avoid it. Whatever you know to be for your highest good in every way, allow or do.

Is there a relationship between what we eat and our states of consciousness: between foods we eat and spiritual awareness?

There can be influences from states of consciousness to food choices and from food choices to states of consciousness. With awakened spiritual consciousness our self-respect improves, which naturally inclines us to choose behaviors and circumstances which are more wholesome and elevating. Spiritually aware people tend to spontaneously choose mental and emotional states, relationships, behaviors, and actions—including a dietary regimen—which they instinctively and intuitively know to be best for them. They don't make excuses to do otherwise, or indulge in feeble attempts to rationalize their "human nature." They are not in the least influenced by opinions of their associates who are addicted to unwholesome

behaviors.

There is a direct relationship between one's dietary habits and health. Fresh, natural foods, in appropriate combinations and quantities, provide essential nutrients: complex carbohydrates, protein, fat, sugar, vitamins, minerals, and enzymes. The ideal diet for the human body is grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits. Meat is best avoided. Milk in moderate amounts may be used, if it can be digested, and well-cooked eggs if desired now and then. However, animal products are not necessary for a healthy human diet. The best liquid to consume is pure water. Fresh foods are preferred to processed, canned, or packaged foods. Frozen vegetables and fruits can be used sometimes, but check the package label to ensure the absence of sugar, salt, or other unnecessary additives.

Eat only when natural hunger is present, and moderately to satisfy the appetite. Ayurvedic food recommendations are made to suit the individual's psychological and physical constitution, suggesting that all five "tastes" be included at one meal: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, astringent, and bitter. This does not mean that the tastes of foods need to be extreme, only that they be mildly discerned when taken into the mouth or that their post-digestive effects include the recommended taste influences. The tastes of foods act upon the primary governing principles which regulate the actions of ether (fine matter), air (prana or circulating influences), fire (biochemical actions), water (fluids), and earth (solid matters).

Individuals who are engaged in introspective self-analysis, psychological transformation, and yoga practices including profound meditation—especially when inner forces are being worked with or are active as a result of using certain Kriya Yoga meditation techniques—need to provide wholesome nourishment to the body. They need to be rested, vital, and as healthy as possible to have abundant energy and keen powers of discernment. The body requires nourishment for maintenance and restoration. An excess of food works a hardship on the body's systems: what cannot be used by the body must be retained as fatty tissue by the body or be eliminated as waste matter. If elimination is not complete, toxic conditions result. The processing of surplus food also depletes life force which could be more constructively utilized for other purposes.

Fresh foods provide the radiance of pure energy which can vitalize our physical systems and energize mental processes. Plants trans-

form the sun's energy and act as carriers of it to us. Concentrated, nourishing foods for practitioners of yoga are helpful. Included in such foods are dates (with the pits removed) and ground or crushed sesame seeds (usually labeled Tahini). Only a small quantity of these need be eaten. Three or four dates, and a full teaspoon of the butter-like ground sesame seeds are usually sufficient. Another useful product for daily early morning use is the jam-like product labeled Chavanprash, available at Indian food markets. Its ingredients include amla fruit, which is very high in vitamin C, and several herbs which are harvested in the foothills of the Himalayas. In the Ayurvedic wellness system this product is considered to have strengthening and rejuvenating influences on the body.

Please provide more information about "rendering service." What, exactly, is meant by this and how does one do it?

A guiding concept for rendering service is to "find a need and fill it, see a hurt and heal it." After one has been properly educated in matters relating to the nature of God and soul, the processes of nature, and the trends of evolution, thoughts should naturally turn to spiritual growth and ways to consciously participate in evolutionary processes. Doing this will remove awareness from self-centered preoccupations and make possible its expansion so that more cosmic perceptions are possible.

We have to attend to our personal needs, of course. But when we are somewhat Self-realized and our personal needs are easily fulfilled, then what? We can then turn our attention to the needs of others and to the needs of the planet, and do what we can to be of help.

Even while engaged in activities necessary for our personal well-being and welfare, we can perform actions with excellence and with intentional purpose. The work that we do to earn money, for instance, should have entirely constructive outcomes. It should fill a real need. It should be of real value. Beyond the sphere of personal activities and relationships, there are other needs we can fill. We can be honest in our relationships. We can wish for the highest and best for others and encourage them to their own fulfillment. We can make wise use of natural resources and avoid polluting the planet.

Perhaps there are specific needs in your own community that

you can help fill. There may be organized endeavors to which you can offer your skills. There may be social welfare centers that need volunteers to staff departments or funds to pay for services. Used, but still good, clothing may be collected and made available to persons who are experiencing temporary hardships. Volunteer fire departments may require financial support. Literacy programs may need volunteer teachers or helpers. Hospitals may welcome persons who are willing to visit patients who have no local family support.

The main thing is to offer all of your thoughts and actions to God. If offering thoughts and actions to God seems a vague concept, then let your thoughts and actions be offered to the processes of life which are now in progress. Live constructively, with a sense of meaningful purpose. *Your greatest service is that of maintaining clear awareness of your spiritual nature, for out of your illumined mind and enlightened consciousness will flow only constructive ideas, actions, and circumstances.*

When thinking in terms of service, don't forget the most important service of all: that of helping to provide for the spiritual education of others who are receptive to learning. Don't leave this avenue of service for others to do. Pass along informative literature, place books in libraries, participate now and then in local meditation groups with other kriya yogis, if possible. Give money on a regular schedule to organized activities which are supportive of the spiritual aspirations of devotees of God and which are reaching out to new truth seekers.

When you are dedicated to worthwhile service, you can more easily feel yourself to be in partnership with evolutionary forces which are supporting nature and awakening souls. Paramahansaji said that willing participation in evolutionary processes is evidence of our willingness to do God's will—that such participation accelerates the spiritual growth process of the one who is thus involved.

Being service-oriented awakens the heart (soul nature). It provides opportunity to demonstrate compassion. It dissolves the ego, the sense of independent selfhood.

What about reading books or perusing other sources of information which are outside of the Kriya Yoga tradition? Is it all right to do this and are there any recommended guidelines for doing so?

New initiates are advised to first study the literature which supports the Kriya Yoga practices of our tradition in order to become well-informed, become grounded in their practices, and to improve their attunement with the line of gurus. Paramahansaji advised new initiates to read only his books, the scripture of their faith, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Also recommended is *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*. Kriya initiates who have been initiated by me should read my writings. The recommended literature is extensive enough that it provides ample study and learning opportunity for at least a year. When one is established in understanding of the basic principles and steady in their practices, whatever else one desires to read can be chosen for its value. *If what is read causes mental confusion, distracts the mind from being interested in purposeful spiritual practices, or creates "static" in the flow of transmission of grace, it should be disregarded.*

Individuals certainly should have freedom to determine their own actions. Whatever is read (or otherwise observed) should be examined in the light of higher understanding. In this way, what is true can be discerned and what is not true can be ignored. For religious-philosophical-metaphysical reading, choose the writings of knowledgeable, spiritually awake people. (Among contemporary literary offerings, there isn't very much material to choose from that conforms to this recommendation.)

It is also a good idea to peruse books and articles which provide news of current events, the results of recent research, scientific discovery and other matters which enable us to be well-informed about the world in which we live. My secular reading, for instance, includes a wide variety of special interest magazines and some newspapers. I read fast, seeing everything while being selective. I also peruse books that are sent to me by other publishers, and some which I buy. I don't recommend that all kriya yogis try to read all the publications I read. I like to be informed about a broad range of subjects.

Choose the major portion of your reading material as you would choose your friends, because that with which you habitually associate may influence you for your higher good or otherwise.

This path is so meaningful and helpful to me. Why isn't it more widely known and *lived*?

This way to God-realization is not more widely known because many who know of it *do not live it.* Millions have been exposed to it through Paramahansaji's writings and the teaching endeavors of many of his disciples, but not all who are attracted to the message take it to heart and apply the teachings with diligence. Many are content to adapt some of the ideas and practices only to somewhat improve their circumstances and provide a degree of mental peace. They find solace in the words but are not sufficiently self-motivated to help themselves to emotional maturity and real spiritual growth. They often want the results of enlightenment but are not willing to do what is necessary to allow themselves to be enlightened. Their delusions and illusions are more attractive to them than God is. These are souls who can be somewhat helped but which are not yet ready for total commitment to the path and complete surrender of self-consciousness. They represent but a portion of the present planetary population and they are the ones to whom teaching endeavors are usually directed. They deserve to be informed, and to be encouraged to a higher way of living. Serving their needs is what may be referred to as a *quantity* ministry: that of offering teachings for the general welfare of people who can in some way benefit from them.

The *quality* ministry is directed to individuals who are sufficiently intelligent and adequately functional to both comprehend the teachings and to skillfully utilize them. I believe there to be many such potential devotees of God who have not yet been introduced to the Kriya Yoga path. They can experience rapid spiritual growth once they are focused on that ideal and their enlightenment will further bless planetary consciousness. We should do what we can to attract them to this path, by living it ourselves and being open to the idea of having increasing numbers of true devotees of God come forward.

I've read that some spiritual masters can take on the karma of their disciples. Is this possible? If so, how, and under what circumstances is it done?

Yes, karmic conditions can sometimes be transferred from one person to another. I once read a newspaper article in which it was

reported that a mother prayed to have her son's disease symptoms given to her. Her son was restored to wellness and she soon manifested the disease symptoms which had formerly caused him pain. The process is that of sympathetic rapport and one need not be a spiritual master to facilitate it.

Some gurus have been known to ease the karmic burden of a disciple by transferring some of the disciple's karma to their own body, or by experiencing a modified challenging circumstance that the disciple might have had to experience in more extreme measure. They do this by establishing telepathic rapport with the disciple and by willing the transference to occur. The seeds of mental causes of effects yet to be manifested are dormant in unconscious levels of the mind, and recorded as mental impressions or memories charged with the energy of emotion.

These karmic (causative) influences can be recognized and released or neutralized by choice, if one is sufficiently objective about doing so. This is the easier way to rid the mind of karmic impressions. Blind urges, intentional desires, memories of trauma and of failure and success, a sense of guilt, and more, all comprise the karmic condition—which has to do with the mind and not of the soul. But the soul, identified with the mind, becomes somewhat restricted by the conditionings of the mind. The self-responsible way to cleanse the mind of karmic impressions and their influences is to live an intentional, soul-aware, God-conscious life. In this way, constructive actions and experiences neutralize karmic impressions. Superconscious meditation introduces superior influences into the mental field which weaken and eliminate the psychic potency of memories.

A more effective, and less personally discomforting approach to helping others is to help them help themselves. This can be done by seeing to their spiritual education and instructing them in matters related to healthy-minded, wholesome, constructive living. When emergency assistance is required, one who is Self-realized can "see through" the condition rather than take on the problems of the person in need of assistance.

Some yoga teachers say that khechari mudra, a technique in which the tongue is made flexible and turned back and elevated into the cavity behind the palate, is helpful when practicing advanced meditation procedures. What about it?

The Sanskrit word *khechari* means to be "free in space." The technique to which you refer is mentioned in old hatha yoga treatises and is said to be helpful in stabilizing prana in the higher brain centers during extended durations of samadhi or refined superconsciousness.

Some meditators have experienced this as a spontaneous occurance when prana flows upward during meditation. When practicing Kriya Pranayama one can perform a modified version of this process by curling the tongue back and upwards to touch the upper palate. This helps to open the throat so that the pranayama can be more effective. However, too much concern about physical matters can distract from the purpose of meditation, which is to remove awareness from physical and mental processes. I have known many individuals who could perform khechari mudra who were (and are) not enlightened. I have also known several enlightened individuals who did not place any importance on the practice.

More helpful, is devotion to the ideal of realizing truth, and surrender of self-consciousness to Self-realization.

Addendum

The proven way to be steadfast on the spiritual path is to be regular in meditation practice and to always be dedicated to doing what you can to encourage others on the path. Encouraging others on the path need not require much personal interaction. I recommend setting a good example and sharing helpful literature so they can have the opportunity to learn and grow. The Kriya Yoga path is, for the most part, a singular one. Just as no one can do for us what we need to do, so we cannot do for another what that person needs to do. And just as our inner experiences are our own—between us and God and the gurus—so theirs are personal and subjective.

Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansaji always counseled disciples to attend to their personal practices and not to talk too much about inner work with others, not even with other Kriya devotees. We can enjoy social interaction at the secular level, but subtle spiritual matters should not be superficially discussed with others. The best way to interest individuals in this work is to pass along selective literature and leave their response to them. Just share the literature and leave it at that. Don't follow up for the purpose of discussing the philosophy or ask their opinion of it.

A convenient booklet to pass along is our annual *With God* handbook. It is economical, easy to read, and convenient for repeated perusal. *Truth Journal* is also ideal for this purpose.

If you know of anyone who is a Kriya initiate who is not aware of this *Radiance* forum magazine, please let them know of its availability. For these first few issues we are printing more than we immediately need, to have extra copies available to share with new initiates and with persons who are already practicing the principles. Pass the word, to the extent that you can, to Kriya initiates with whom you are acquainted. Every disciple of this tradition should be interested in the information shared in this publication and in improving their attunement with the guru line.

If you live near one of our meditation groups, attend sessions when you can, to reinforce your practice and to quietly support oth-

ers who participate. If no Kriya meditation group currently exists in your area, consider making one available on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly schedule. Keep it simple. Choose a convenient meeting place, at a convenient time. Announce it to interested persons. Gather for one hour of meditation and let people go their way. There is no need to socialize or discuss the teaching. Just get together and meditate. Let me know that you are doing this, so I can be informed.

Attend seminar programs when I visit a community near you. Attend scheduled retreat programs here at Lakemont when you can, to review your practices and avail yourself of the opportunity to be mentally and spiritually renewed. At all times, be inwardly aware of the presence of God and attuned to the gurus. Our outer behaviors should support our inner life, and as our inner life is more anchored in the Infinite, it influences our behaviors.

The path of Kriya Yoga is the way of self-chosen, intentional right actions while being alert to spontaneous, soul awakening and life supportive unfoldments as they occur. It is the way of devotion to God balanced by intelligence. Remember Sri Yukteswar's words to his disciples: "Saintliness is not dumbness." Devotees of God who are successful at living their lives are more likely to be successful in their spiritual growth endeavors. So avoid passivity, superficiality, purposelessness, and any tendency to prefer delusion (erroneous beliefs) and illusion (misperception of the facts of life) over clear understanding and accurate perception. Be calmly enthusiastic and avoid laziness. It is easier to be enthusiastic when we have a sense of purpose in life.

Advice on Meditation Practice

To meditate for a short time with depth is better than meditating for a longer time with the mind overwhelmed with restlessness.

In the beginning, don't force yourself to sit for a long time. Strive for shorter but deeper, meditations. Then gradually, as you become accustomed to going deep, lengthen the time you sit in meditation.

Don't feel badly if you find yourself too restless to meditate deeply. Calmness will come in time, if you practice regularly. Just never accept the thought that meditation is not for you. Remember, calmness is your eternal, true nature.

In meditation, try to go beyond thinking. As long as thoughts enter the mind, you are functioning on the self-conscious level. When your awareness withdraws into superconsciousness, you are centered in bliss. Then you can be aware of your soul nature.

While meditating, don't concentrate on the results of meditation. Meditate, instead, to please God. If you seek results, you will be disappointed if they aren't immediately forthcoming.

Visualize your consciousness like a blue light encompassing all space. Imagine the stars and galaxies shining like the lights of a distant city. Meditate on your vastness within. You will find this technique an important supplement to the other meditation techniques. It will help to remind you of your inner, divine condition.

– Paramahansa Yogananda

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Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

January – March 1995 Number 3

Light on the Path

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LIBERATED?

Right spiritual practice removes us from all obstacles: from karma, from delusions and illusions, and even from the subtle influences of the attributes or qualities (*gunas*) of nature which regulate cosmic forces. Our complete awakening to God-realization is the certain way to soul liberation.

Discipleship

CHOOSING TO BE DEDICATED TO GOD

The Kriya Yoga path is for committed disciples who are willing to be totally surrendered in God. Any other approach is not acceptable and will not have satisfying results. This path enables a sincere devotee of God to accomplish in the present incarnation that which might otherwise require many. For one who aspires to soul liberation, discipleship is not merely an alternative option—it is the only way to realize it.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates, to provide forthright answers to relevant questions and clear explanations in response to meaningful inquiries. Participation is encouraged.

Publisher's Note

Radiance: A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates, is published four times a year for initiated disciples of this enlightenment tradition. Most readers were initiated by me, but devotees who were initiated by another ordained representative of the guru line of Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors, are cordially invited to receive this publication. All Kriya devotees are members of a spiritual family and are one in the reality of God.

Please keep this information confidential. You may, of course, share *Radiance* with others whom you may know are also Kriya initiates. Individuals sincerely interested in knowing more about this path can be directed to me or to another qualified source.

Use the form provided with each issue to participate in the forum dialogue section of the magazine. Your questions or comments are useful in helping me to know of your needs and your interests, and can be helpful to other readers who may benefit from the information which is published as a result of your thoughtful participation.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LIBERATED?

To disciples, Paramahansa Yogananda would sometimes say, "If you allow me [to do so], I will reveal God to you." Words attributed to Jesus (*The Gospel According to Saint John 8:31,32*) are likewise revealing: "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Buddha ("the enlightened one") taught the fulfillment of *nirvana* (the extinguishing or removal of restrictions to clear awareness) to be the utmost purpose of spiritual questing and practice. All enlightenment traditions teach that salvation, liberation of consciousness, is the consummation of heart-impelled aspiration. Many sincere devotees of God affirm that full illumination of consciousness—enlightenment, or the unfoldment of flawless knowledge—is their ardent desire. But what does it mean to be spiritually free? What is liberation of consciousness, and what are its results?

In various philosophical texts of India, every stage of spiritual growth has been precisely classified. From a state of ordinary self-consciousness, a devotee awakens to Self-knowledge which, when mature, results in a state of permanent realization that allows freedom of thought and function even while some karmic conditions remain and full God-realization is yet to unfold. This stage is referred to as "salvation while embodied." From this level the devotee further awakens from all delusions and is no longer unduly influenced by karmic conditions or by environmental circumstances. This is the state of being "supremely free" or fully liberated.

The great majority of devotees are still at self-conscious (egocentric) levels of awareness, contending with their troublesome mental and emotional conflicts, and at the mercy of their delusions, illusions, and various environmental circumstances. Even though sincere on the path, they often look to higher states of consciousness as goals to be achieved—sometime, somehow, or perhaps. Their intel-

lectual understanding, or intuitive grasp, of what liberation of consciousness is, is unclear.

What is Right Spiritual Practice?

Right spiritual practice is that approach to soul awakening and liberation of consciousness that gets the job done as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Total dedication to Kriya Yoga is right spiritual practice. Kriyas are the intentional actions we implement to help ourselves to wellness, function, and spiritual growth, and the spontaneous, transformative actions which occur as the result of inner awakening and grace. Total dedication to Kriya Yoga removes us from all obstacles that interfere with spiritual awakening. When we are effectively removed from former causes of restriction, for us, they cease to exist.

The primary cause of restriction is delusion because of being unaware of our true, soul nature. This results in ego, the sense of independent existence as a mind, or as mind-body complex if we are physically embodied. We are then inclined to believe ourselves to be subject to birth and death, beginning and ending, and entirely dependent upon externals for our well-being, security, satisfaction of desires, and whatever pleasures we are inclined to experience. This also causes us to believe ourselves to be effects of circumstances instead of being aware of the fact that we have abilities which can enable us to choose freedom of function rather than be victims of causes external to ourselves. The primary delusion of not-knowledge (Sanskrit, *avidya*) is the basis of all other delusions (erroneous beliefs)—everything we may believe to be true which is not true. Delusions can restrict awareness and function until final liberation of consciousness—when total knowledge of Self, God, and cosmic processes unfolds and remains.

Many highly Self-realized saints are still somewhat deluded, and will be until they awaken fully in God. While we should not waste our time in idle speculation about who is enlightened or liberated and who is not, it is well to be aware of the fact that even spiritually advanced souls, if they are not liberated, have their own inner overcoming to accomplish and have a "shadow side" to their human nature. The shadow side of us is comprised of the mental condi-

tionings and emotional complexes which yet persist in spite of our otherwise clear states of consciousness.

Master once said that, of all yogis and saints he had met in India, only a very few were fully liberated. He shared this information privately, with no hint of being judgmental. His constant advice to disciples was to aspire to complete liberation of consciousness, often referring to our need to "go all the way" in the present incarnation.

Our spiritual accomplishment is in accord with our aspiration and our dedication to spiritual practice. Some devotees are complacent, thinking that if they do their human best they will at least make some progress. Some do aspire to liberation of consciousness but do not believe it to be possible for them in the foreseeable future. Others, somewhat interested in spiritual growth matters but more interested in playing a merely human role, allow themselves to be controlled by their thoughts, moods, and sensory impulses and only dabble at spiritual practice. In our present time-cycle, only a few purposeful disciples of God are intent upon rapid spiritual growth.

Kriya Yoga practice enables us to be self-responsible for our lives and to facilitate accelerated soul awakening. The more we do for ourselves, the more open to grace we become. Please remember that Kriya Yoga practice is more than philosophical study and the practice of meditation routines—it includes all that we do with clear understanding and resolved intention. Living our lives well is the most effective spiritual practice for implementing psychological transformations which remove mental conditionings and psychological restrictions to the free flow of soul awareness. It is, of course, useful to have ideal circumstances which are supportive of spiritual growth, and time to give to study, self-analysis, and meditation. Even if present environmental circumstances are not ideal, we can still choose to devote time to study and inner work. At other times, in the midst of duties and relationships, we can maintain an attitude of calm detachment and be appropriate at all times. Doing this is a transformative spiritual training exercise—and because of our present circumstances, which we have created, chosen, or agreed to, most of us have ample opportunity to engage in it.

Devotees proficient in meditation or learned in philosophical matters are not the only ones who may be liberated from delusions and their consequent troubles. It is quite possible that individuals

who quietly go about their personal duties with complete faith in God can also be liberated. There are several outer ways to inner growth. Some are, by temperament, more suited to intellectual examination of the facts of life, the way of knowledge. Others are more suited to selfless service, devotion to God, or to contemplative meditation. A balanced approach which integrates all of these ways is ideal for most mature devotees, although liberation is possible for one who is totally dedicated to one of the ways. The best practice is to be true to the way which is most suitable for fast spiritual progress.

Paramahansaji carefully monitored the spiritual progress of disciples. To one who was too emotionally devotional, he might counsel the cultivation of dispassion and more intellectual development. To another, who was primarily analytical, he might counsel a balance of devotion and selfless service. To a hard worker, he might counsel more quiet time and meditation. To an introverted disciple with diminished interest in outer matters, he might recommend sensible involvement in meaningful activities. His emphasis, always, was balanced living while anchored in awareness of God.

In accord with the theme of devotion to duty and soul unfoldment possibilities, the story of how the mother of the south Indian saint, Ramana Maharishi, was assisted to a higher stage of consciousness is of interest. Ramana Maharishi lived almost all of his adult life at his ashram at the base of Arunachala Mountain near the town of Tiruvannamalai. In her later years, his mother also resided there.When she was elderly and frail, and near to making her transition, the saint sat by her side, placed his hands on her head and heart, and shared with her his presence and inner knowing. Later, he said that she had attained liberation.

On another occasion, the Maharishi (Sanskrit, *great seer*) was informed that one of the older ashram cows was weak and seemed to be near death. He went to where she was and remained with her until she made her transition. Later, when asked about the cow, he said she had been liberated. Someone asked, "Do you mean that she is liberated from being a cow in a future incarnation and will be born in a human body?" The saint said, "No, she is free. Freedom is freedom."

Freedom from Karma

The Sanskrit word *karma* refers to causes and their effects. The inner causes which can contribute to corresponding effects include our inherited genetic predispositions, basic psychophysiological constitution, mental conditionings (*samkaras*, mental impressions or memories), mental attitudes, emotional states, desires, and all else that in any way clouds our awareness or influences us or our behaviors and circumstances. Karma is of the mind or body, not of the soul. Therefore, desist from claiming karma by thought or by deed. Don't refer to "my karma" as though you own it or that it possesses you. You may have conditions to work with, get rid of, or transcend, but they are not yours (unless, for some perverse reason, you want to claim them).

Any causative influence in our lives is karmic. It may be as gross as our genetic predispositions or as refined as our mental attitudes of pessimism or optimism. It may be habit, addiction, desire, emotional trauma, or environmental circumstance we can change if we want to. Anything other than our soul impulses and God's grace which is influential, is karmic—it is a relative condition that can be modified, neutralized, avoided, or transcended. It may be a condition we created, consciously accepted, or blindly became involved with, but it is still subject to being understood and its influences rendered impotent.

So-called "good karma" influences us in constructive ways, while its opposite may be destructive, troublesome, or painful. Karmic conditions which are of the latter kind—whether presently influential or which have potential to influence—can be modified or neutralized by constructive thoughts, feelings, and actions. Common examples are: intentionally replacing an unwanted habit with one which is more desirable, replacing negative thinking with positive thinking, replacing laziness with self-motivation, and replacing confused or purposeless behavior with intentional actions. Instead of being a victim, instead of habitually wondering why things are happening to you, think in terms of what you can do to cause desired effects instead of being victimized. Or, better yet, contemplate the possibility of rising above causative mental and physical laws, when possible, by learning to experience spontaneous unfoldments of

refined states of consciousness and orderly unfoldments of events and circumstances.

We often have to initiate actions and cause effects, and there is nothing spiritually debilitating by doing so, so long as we are high-minded, purely motivated, and entirely constructive in intention and action. Even so, there is a higher law that supersedes mental and physical laws of causation: the law of grace. The ideal is to eventually rise above total dependence upon relative, causative laws and to be in the flow of spontaneous right action. Then, even our constructive thoughts and intentional actions will be soul inspired and we will be removed from the mental aspects of the karmic law. Other aspects, those which relate to our inherited characteristics and environmental influences (including those which are the result of collective behaviors of society and even influences innate to the actions of the universe and to consciousness itself), can also be transcended.

The mind-body constitution can be balanced by natural living, orderly thinking, emotional calm, diet, meditation, and various therapeutic procedures as might be necessary. These methods are included in Ayurvedic regimens. We can live in harmony with others with whom we share this planet by choosing our associates wisely and by finding our "right place" in life so that we flow with circumstances supportive of our destiny while being untouched by circumstances which are not. When we are fulfilling our destiny, the forces of evolution carry us along to our highest good and even our spiritual unfoldment is dramatically quickened.

The most subtle influences upon our states of consciousness, and thus upon the mind and body, are the *gunas* (qualities or regulating attributes innate to consciousness). These are influential from the field of the Godhead through to the physical realm. They have three characteristic dispositions or inclinations: 1) clarity or luminosity (*sattva*); 2) inertia (*tamas*); 3) influential, transformative action (*rajas*). These qualities or attributes are derived, respectively, from: 1) the positive polarity of consciousness; 2) the negative polarity of consciousness; 3) the interaction between sattva and tamas which is inclined to produce equilibrium or neutrality. Their influences are observed in every aspect of nature. When the gunas of the Godhead are in a state of perfect equilibrium, the Godhead is self-contained

and universal manifestation is nonexistent. When tamas guna becomes influential, the universes are manifested, along with souls which identify with universal manifestation. Sattva guna influences attract manifest nature back to the original state of equilibrium. The transformative actions which occur, during universal manifestation and the restoration of nature to the unmanifest state, are those of rajas guna. Thus, sages declare the universe to be a play, an interaction, of the influences of the three fundamental attributes of consciousness. (The word "play" refers to interaction, rather than universal processes being a planned or contrived game—although viewing them as such can enable us to have a more objective, neutral relationship with it.)

Because these qualities and their influences are all-pervading, it is useful for us to learn to constructively relate to them. This is one reason why a pure, wholesome, and entirely constructive lifestyle is recommended. We are not advised to "be good" for the purpose of pleasing God and attracting divine favor. We are advised to be good or righteous in order to be in accord with the influences within the field of nature which support our higher aspirations. Thus, ordered (rational) thinking, high resolve, emotional calm, wholesome diet, a balance of activity and rest, and willing compliance with mental and physical laws of causation are supportive of wellness, affluence, and spiritual growth. Opposite behaviors are self-defeating and often destructive. The mental states we cultivate (or allow), the emotional states we choose to experience, everything to which we relate (other people, events, environmental circumstances), may influence us in some way. What we choose to allow in our experience is also indicative of our prevailing states of consciousness and whether or not we are living with conscious, intentional purpose.

When teaching new truth seekers the way to Self-realization it is traditional, because practical, to first provide an explanation of God, universal processes, how souls become involved with nature, and the way to awaken to full knowledge and experience of God. It is not presumed by the teacher that the new student will immediately comprehend the entirety of what is taught, although instances of quick enlightenment are said to sometimes occur. An overview is provided so that the facts of life are known about even if not completely understood. Thereafter, the practicing devotee cannot hon-

estly claim to be unaware of the foundation principles upon which right living and right spiritual practice are structured.

After a philosophical overview, the new seeker is advised to live a clean, moral, ethical, intentional life, and specific practices for the purpose of implementing psychological transformation and spiritual growth are taught. The student—now a committed disciple on the path—has only to adhere to the program. The teacher can encourage, advise, and share spiritual force and clear consciousness, but the student-disciple is responsible for his or her own actions. When the guru or teacher counsels the disciple to cultivate optimism, be pure-minded, be willing to grow to emotional maturity, choose pure foods, associate with healthy-minded people, be selfless, render service, and be regular in prayer and meditation practices, everything advised is for a purpose. A disciple may, in the early stages, follow instructions because obedience will result in worthwhile self-discipline. In time, the disciple will discover that living as advised is the most natural, wholesome, and constructive way to live.

The influences of the gunas in relationship to the mind can be easily noted. The aware, unconditioned state of the mind is superconsciousness or *samadhi*. This is because the soul's natural state is pure awareness—which reflects in the mental field that is not conflicted by conditonings, disturbed (made restless) by rajas guna, or clouded by tamas guna. The purpose of yoga practice (which, for a Kriya yogi, includes everything which is done to support wellness, function, and spiritual growth) is to experience pure awareness without interference, or unqualified samadhi. Samadhi is not a conditioned mental state. It is complete experience of oneness or wholeness—the result of awareness being removed from objective identifications and thus restored to itself.

Because of involvement with mental processes which are in a state of fluctuation and transformation, soul awareness becomes fragmented, like rays of light from their source which reflect from various nearby surfaces. Yoga practice enables one to live harmoniously, to be healthy and emotionally mature, and to experience mental calmness which allows clear awareness (samadhi) to prevail.

Constant movements and transformations (Sanskrit, *vrittis*) of thoughts in the mental field are due to restlessness. These are not to be suppressed but are to be turned back and dissolved into their

source. When they are somewhat restrained, clear awareness is experienced, but is temporary because modified when restlessness again causes disorderly mental activities. By repeated samadhi experience one learns to retain clear awareness even when thoughts are active, perceiving that the real (soul) nature is other than the mind and its actions. Samadhi then becomes permanent. So long as the influences of the gunas are present, soul awareness filtered through the mind can be modified in five ways: 1) There can be unobstructed knowledge of the truth of one's real nature as consciousness; 2) There can be partial awareness of what is true; 3) There can be vivid, unregulated imaginings which result in hallucinations, distortions of what is true; 4) One can experience sleep, with varied states of unconsciousness and random dreaming; 5) Mental impressions, memory, can be the soul's primary support of awareness, which may be the basis of one's invalid conviction of being other than a spiritual being.

Soul Liberation is the Result of Awakening in God

The reality of God cannot be denied by a surrendered disciple on the enlightenment path. Even if one engages in spiritual practice without any sense of the reality of God, as soul unfoldment progresses a Larger Something will be apprehended, related to, and finally experienced. We do not have independent existence. We did not create ourselves. The universe does not have independent existence and did not come out of nothing. In fact, there is no universe apart from God and there are no individual beings. There is only God. The unmanifest aspect of God is the cause of universal manifestation and pervades it. Cosmic forces are regulated by the gunas, the qualities or attributes of God's consciousness. The allness of God cannot be known even by intellectual analysis, but can be directly experienced and apprehended by the soul. The clouding of the mind by delusion (fixed, invalid beliefs, as well as lack of knowledge) blinds us to the truth. Thereafter, we err in endeavors to perceive or discern, and experience illusions. Liberation is the conscious state of being devoid of delusions and illusions. This means that not only are we knowledgeable about ourselves and our relationship with the

Infinite, all of the invalid beliefs (and "dumb" ideas) about ordinary, everyday relationships and lifestyle routines are absent. Liberation, the result of our experience of spiritual Selfhood, is not a spaced-out, other worldly condition. When liberated, we are able to effectively live our lives without being afflicted by conditions which restrict people who are still attached to and confined by their delusions and illusions. With increasing Self-realization our lives become uncomplicated, enjoyable, and productive. Relationships become healthy because open and mutually supportive. Fear, mental perversity, addictions, attachments, selfishness, and all other characteristics of conditioned self-conscious states are gone.

We can assist ourselves to spiritual growth by immediately renouncing the characteristics of the deluded self-conscious state. Doing this does not usually result in instantaneous enlightenment but will somewhat check the flow of nonuseful, habitual behaviors that can contribute to personal distress and misfortune. The first constructive step in the direction of desired change is to stop doing what is harmful or ineffectual and to start doing what is ultimately helpful to actualizing our higher aspirations. This is why all enlightenment teachers stress the importance of living according to the guidelines recommended by their tradition. In effect, they say, "If you will do these things, you will accomplish your purposes." Experience that provides knowledge is the best teacher.

CHOOSING TO BE DEDICATED TO GOD

Virtue is righteous or moral excellence. Unqualified devotion to truth—which automatically causes us to be totally dedicated to God—is the highest virtue. Because of it, we are certain to be faithful to our high calling. Without it, we are likely to stray from the spiritual path or become involved in nonessentials.

The Kriya Yoga path is for committed disciples who are willing to be totally surrendered to God. Any other approach is not acceptable and will not have satisfying results. For one who sincerely aspires to soul liberation, discipleship is not merely an alternative option, it is the only way to realize it.

In our examination of the discipleship commitment we are not speculating about ways to marginally improve the human condition or to provide a comfortable degree of emotional well-being; we are going straight to the core of the matter for the purpose of learning how to live effectively and awaken to Self-knowledge which unfolds knowledge and experience of God.

Without the support of soul-based aspiration and dedicated commitment to the spiritual path, we are but inept creatures vainly attempting an endeavor which, while truly a noble one, will be almost impossible to achieve. Just as individuals who are addicted to substances or self-defeating behaviors may be advised to stop denying their dependent behaviors and turn to a Higher Power, so sincere truth seekers who are addicted to delusional, self-conscious behaviors are advised by enlightened teachers to stop denying their spiritual ignorance and turn to God. We have to admit that we are incompetent before we can learn how to live effectively. Refusal to do this is due to mental perversity, a characteristic of egocentric awareness. *Ego*, as referred to in our philosophical system, does not refer to personal pride, but to the sense of individual selfhood. When fixated in ego-sense the soul tends to cling to its limited point of

view; thus the resistance to learning, practice, and growing that is routinely dramatized by shallow-minded truth seekers or "sincere" devotees who allow their emotions to cloud their reason or interfere with commonsense behaviors.

For a surrendered devotee of God, the spiritual path can be a joyful experience of ever-new discovery and growth. For one who is not surrendered, the spiritual path can be devastating to pride, which it has to be if progress is to be made. With commitment to spiritual growth, the ideal soul resolve is, "No matter what it takes, with God's help I will persevere to the end, to complete awakening in God!"

An axiom sometimes heard about the guru disciple relationship is, "The closer you get to the guru, the more likely you are to get burned!" This is because the guru is God-centered. When self-centeredness is confronted by God-centeredness, guess which condition is going to be challenged? In this relationship the contest is not between ego-states. It is between muddled psychological states and clear awareness; between self-serving interests and Self-realized selflessness.

There can be, and often is, a relaxed, friendly, personal relationship between a guru and the disciple. We should know, however, that the guru's primary interest is the disciple's psychological transformation and spiritual growth. The guru may enjoy a personal relationship, but does not need it. The still-awakening disciple, too, may enjoy the relationship but also often has emotional needs or a personal agenda which he or she may endeavor to have satisfied. The most fulfilling guru disciple relationship is that in which the guru shares knowledge and spiritual force and the disciple listens, learns, becomes attuned, and diligently adheres to right living regimens and spiritual practices. Paramahansaji told me, and others, "I want you to become as strong as I am." The guru's major role is to assist the disciple to liberation of consciousness. Any other interaction is of secondary importance.

One of Master's first male disciples in America was Dr. Minot Lewis, a dentist in Boston, Massachusetts, whose wife arranged their meeting. Dr. Lewis remained a loyal disciple and co-worker throughout his life. Once, during their early years together, Master invited Dr. Lewis to attend a special function with him. Dr. Lewis explained that he had family obligations which required him to decline the

invitation, supporting his explanation with the aphorism: Blood is thicker than water (family relationships are stronger than social relationships.) "Yes," Master said, "But spirit is finer than blood (spiritual relationships transcend all others, even those of family)."

We have no way of knowing how many mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters we have had through the ages during our (perhaps) many sojourns on earth and in astral spheres. The final, most meaningful relationship is with our guru line or the representatives of the enlightenment tradition we are destined to know. It is from this relationship that we awaken in God and experience an ending of transitory connections. This does not mean that we cannot appreciate and enjoy human relationships, only that we should look beyond them to That which makes significant the ones of value.

Some yogis say that a karmic relationship and a soul bond can exit between souls in a family line, and that psychic (soul) influences can be transmitted between them. It is sometimes said that when a soul becomes liberated, fifty generations back and forward of the present family unit are spiritually benefited. Why fifty, as the number for the generations to be influenced, I do not know. I do know that, as Kriya initiates, we are members of a larger, spiritual family of devotees who share common aspirations and, of redeeming value, the overshadowing of the consciousness of our guru lineage through whom God's blessings flow.

Perfecting Discipleship by Listening, Observation, Responsiveness, and Dedicated Selfless Service

Discipleship is a learning and growing process. To learn and to grow we need to be able to listen, to observe, to respond to instructions and inner guidance, and to be selflessly dedicated to service. On the discipleship path much is received by grace, and more can be received when our capacities to receive are increased. We can increase our capacity to receive by expanding awareness beyond mental states and states of consciousness which are presently limited. We can do this by right living, right meditation, and by learning to live more from soul awareness and less from self-conscious states. As we do this, we become naturally inclined to be of real service to others and to the nurturing of the planet. One of the most obvious

ways to have and to improve an attunement with your enlightenment tradition and its saints is to actively participate, to the extent possible, with their primary mission—which is to spiritually awaken and educate others who are seeking the light of understanding.

In our early stages of practice it is normal to be helped on the path. As we become more aware and more functional, we can begin to share "the good news" with others who are receptive to the teaching. It is, of course, best to avoid bothering people who are not interested. We do not have to be Self-realized to do this; we can ask our guru or teacher how to proceed and we can use our common sense. The usual way is to offer assistance to the work already being done in order to extend its influence. Our participation may be in the form of volunteer work—freely offering our practical knowledge when and where needed—or providing funds for activities and programs already in progress. It is the latter kind of participation that often proves most challenging for disciples, perhaps because it directly confronts their psychological conflicts about material versus spiritual values and the matter of being totally committed to one's duty when that duty is known.

Only people with limited understanding have a problem in relationship to material versus spiritual values. They do not yet know that the field of God produced the universe and pervades it. They may erroneously think that handling material substance is a concession to their physical needs and is not a spiritual activity, or that to grow spiritually they should divest themselves of all material involvements except those which are necessary for survival and maintenance of their simple lifestyle. What they need to do, to liberate themselves from bondage to delusive beliefs and inappropriate or irresponsible behaviors, is to learn to live freely in the world without attachments and to use available resources wisely. Wise use of available resources means to be sufficiently affluent to have all personal needs easily met and have a surplus which allows one to live beyond a self-maintenance level and to give to worthy causes.

The ideal is to be able do this as soon as possible; not to wishfully think in terms of eventual affluence while remaining self-centered and wholly preoccupied with mundane affairs. A sensible approach is to decide how much money, or resources in other forms, is needed for personal use and for fulfilling duties and meeting obligations—

plus a comfortable surplus—and how much you choose to give to support worthwhile causes. Then immediately engage in a systematic regimen of self-responsible actions and selfless service, including selfless giving for the culturing and spiritual upliftment of others. An orderly way to do this is to decide how much time, energy, and resources you want to devote to these causes and do so on a regular schedule. Do it selflessly. If you are giving in the right way, to the right projects, you will feel yourself to be a participant in the process and there will be no resistance to your actions and no thoughts or feelings about what you are getting out of it. You will be doing your duty and this will cause you to feel good about what you are doing.

As you receive from the Source, give to the Source. See yourself as one of God's agents for the distribution of wealth and the promulgation of knowledge, and leave the results to destiny. Remember that to the degree that you are in harmony with life, the universe will meet your needs easily and abundantly. When we have any feeling or circumstantial experience of limitation, we are in need of clearing our consciousness so that we can be restored to awareness of wholeness. Wholeness includes everything, with nothing lacking. If we think we are spiritually awake but are still experiencing limitation, we need to do some work on ourselves, to straighten out our thinking and come to terms with life as it is, without restrictive beliefs or illusions. When we learn to open ourselves to surrendered participation with life's processes, we discover that our spiritual growth is more satisfying. What we want is authentic spiritual awareness that enables us to clearly know that God's consciousness pervades the universe, and is not a dream-like mental state that provides a false sense of being out of touch with everyday realities.

Paramahansaji, for instance, was born into an affluent family and grew up with every convenience and opportunity. When he came to America, in 1920, he was a missionary here because very few people knew anything about yoga. Although he attracted large audiences during his lecture travels to major cities in the decade that followed, his expenses were also heavy. Through the third and fourth decade of this century, attracting funds for the growth of the work was a challenge. Some who came to him did not have surplus wealth, and many who did were not generous. Many people of modest means

and a few with greater financial resources were supportive, so that organizational needs were met, often at the last moment. Of course, James J. Lynn (Rajasi Janakananda) was extremely generous, when able to be so, and before his passing in 1955 transferred approximately three million dollars to Master's organization. Those were 1955 dollars—which would be valued at several times that amount today. Since then, Self-Realization Fellowship has flourished and funding today seems abundant, for which I am thankful. Having been somewhat aware of SRF's organizational affairs during my years there in the early 1950s, I know of how Master's inner vision and personal use of wisdom-guided will carried the work for many years. He always trusted in God while giving his utmost in every way. I wish it had been easier for him.

Are We 100 Percent Committed on the Spiritual Path, or Not?

We only have to ask ourselves one question: *Am I one hundred percent committed on the spiritual path?* If the inner response is an unhesitating yes, the way before us is clear. If otherwise, more prayer practice and totally honest soul-searching is in order. With total commitment, there is no psychological resistance to the performance of actions we know to be right. We freely give ourselves to processes which facilitate spiritual growth and enable us to function effectively.

If commitment is not yet total, thoughts will be erratic, moods will fluctuate, and behaviors will be unpredictable. The characteristics of self-conscious, conditioned behavior which are in opposition to our higher aspirations will be evident. We will be subject to the whims of the mind, fickle and unfaithful to our duties. Karma will be impelling. The trends of fate (because of mundane causes manifesting their effects) will be more influential than will be the currents of soul destiny. Self-defeating behaviors will become more common. Circumstances and relationships will be precarious. Life will be shallow and unfulfilling. All of these conditions can be changed for the better and good fortune will become more pronounced when total dedication to God is a certainty.

Think about your remaining years on earth. How many yet remain before you depart this world? Are you prepared, now, for that

episode on your continuing journey in space-time that will only end when you awaken completely in God? Unenlightened life is always unstable because subject to so many influences, known and unknown. The only security is in Self-knowledge which leads to God-realization. This side of such knowledge and experience we wander from event to event, from relationship to relationship, like displaced persons without a permanent abode. Neither the passage of time nor our wistful hopes have power to transform our lives. There is That which has transformative influence, and which will awaken, renew, and illumine our minds, when we let it.

Often, I heard Master say, "God will give you everything when you have prepared yourself to receive it." Knowing about God, and the possibilities of experiencing God, while feeling apart from God with no knowledge of how to dissolve that feeling of separation, is painful. If God talked like we talk, we might hear the words: "I will wipe the tears from your eyes and make as nothing all of your problems and pains, if you will but say yes to me. Will you say yes? With words or actions, let me hear you speak. I am waiting. I am listening. Let me hear you speak."

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Forum themes are requested by our readers. Use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in these quarterly open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of all who peruse these pages.

Why is Kriya pranayama sometimes taught as breathing through the partially open mouth and, at other times, as breathing through the nostrils?

When first learning the technique, some devotees find easier to adapt to the feeling of the inflowing air against the lower back of the throat, to facilitate feeling in the spinal pathway (*sushumna nadi*). Once this is experienced, the pranayama can usually be more comfortably practiced while breathing through the nostrils. The main thing is to effect the feeling of "suction" in the lower throat and transfer that feeling to the spinal pathway. The key to practicing this process is to relax into it and find that level of poise and inner awareness which allows the pranayama to be experienced easily and naturally.

I've read in some yogic literature that Kriya pranayama and superconscious experiences "roast" or burn (dissolve) seeds of karma. What about this?

Paramahansaji sometimes referred to this. Active flows of *prana shakti* (awakened life forces flowing more obviously through the body)

tend to harmonize physical and mental systems, enlivening the nervous system, ordering thought processes, and weakening and neutralizing *samskaras* (mental impressions with potential or influential inclinations). Dynamic prana flows can also stir up mental impressions, causing them to be known to us so they can be confronted and processed. This is why some yogis say that spiritual practice "speeds up the working out of karma." Repeated superconscious experiences—until superconsciousness becomes our constant experience—are transformative. They, being superior to conditioned states of consciousness, tend to restore awareness to wholeness as well as purify the mental field and physical body. We might say that mind and body becomes "spiritualized" to the extent that we can invite more refined influences into mind and body.

Purposeful living, nutritious food, sunlight and fresh air, adequate rest, mental peace, and emotional calm—all that contributes to wellness—are also helpful to ridding the mind of destructive conditionings and tendencies. When we are healthy, and have high energy reserves, it is easier to relate to mental and emotional challenges and to be more self-determined, with clear-minded ability to choose our actions and experiences. It is helpful to always remember that you are a spiritual being, superior to karmic circumstances. Association with spiritually awake people, and mental and spiritual attunement with saints, can be helpful in awakening us to levels of awareness at which karmic influences are minimized or rendered inoperable.

What about the usefulness of practicing mantra, in certain situations during the day other than when sitting for formal practice of meditation? Can this be useful?

Mantra practice is usually done while meditating, to calm mental activity and internalize attention. However, at any time during the day one can mentally chant mantras such as "Om God" (or any mantra that has appeal) to remain soul-centered and to keep awareness clear. Master wrote a poem ("God, God, God") which he suggested that disciples should read from time to time, and thus be inspired to inwardly chant "God, God, God" day and night whenever inclined to do so.

Did Paramahansaji recommend any special physical health regimens for disciples, and did he practice any special routines?

Yes, Master frequently emphasized the usefulness of healing, when necessary, and a variety of health enhancement practices. His general counsel was to balance activities with rest, to be cheerful and optimistic at all times, choose a nutritious diet, and exercise regularly. For exercise, he recommended hatha yoga, swimming, walking, and any other exercise activity one might enjoy. He also innovated a system of "energization" exercises which he practiced, and recommended to others. He also recommended an occasional one day fast, with only pure water or fresh fruit juice diluted with water. For this he recommended that it be done on a rest day, such as a Saturday or a Sunday, and on that day to give more time to meditation and contemplation of God. He suggested that, now and then, one might eat only vegetables and fresh fruits for several days, to provide rest for the body and detoxify it. He was not an extremist about such matters, however.

He said that when outside in the fresh air and sunlight, one could visualize taking in prana or life force from the air and visualize absorption of the solar rays. While recommending these practical routines, he also reminded us not to be too body conscious—not to be overly identified with the physical form. He viewed the body as the soul's outlet through which worthwhile work was to be accomplished.

What is the recommended schedule for increasing the number of Kriya pranayamas? Are there higher techniques for persons who have been using the usual one for some time?

Master usually recommended that new Kriya initiates do 14 cycles of the pranayama (to ensure 12 complete cycles) once or twice a day. After six months or a year, depending upon one's ease of practice and proficiency, the number could be increased, usually in multiples of 12—thus, increased to 24, then 36, then 48, and so on. This was his usual advice to new initiates. Privately, he advised according to the individual's capacity for practice. The recommended guideline is to practice as many as are comfortable, without straining. The flows of life force, when practicing the pranayama, internalize attention, encourage the body's vital forces to flow upward to the

higher brain centers, and enliven the nervous system. The aftereffects tranquility experienced as the result of the pranayamas is the more refined benefit because it allows spontaneous superconscious awareness and entry into more refined levels of meditation experience. There is no advantage to be gained by practicing excessive numbers of Kriya pranayama. One should always remain within the range of comfort. Yoga is not the way of struggle and strain. It is the way of result-producing practice and surrender.

The "highest technique" is to contemplate the transcendental field of consciousness while surrendering in God. All others are preliminary and preparatory. Lahiri Mahasaya was taught a variety of meditation techniques by Mahavatar Babaji, in 1861, and taught to his disciples those which he felt were most effective. After mantra and sound-light contemplation techniques, which are easily learned and practiced, he taught Kriya pranayama. Then, according to the disciple's proficiency in the practice of these basic techniques, he sometimes taught more intricate procedures. He always said the first Kriya pranayama was the most important of the advanced techniques because its faithful, correct practice could provide beneficial results. Techniques, properly practiced, result in an adjustment of states of consciousness, from restricted to less restricted states, or from gross to more refined levels. Too much emphasis on mechanical practice of technique binds the meditator's attention to the body and to mental processes—while the ultimate purpose is to remove awareness from physical and mental identification during deep meditation. I have known several Kriya disciples who used "advanced" techniques—or so they said—who were (and are) still small-minded and meanspirited. Among some Kriya representatives there is too much debate about who (or which organization) teaches the "authentic" techniques and procedures, and about whether or not they are taught correctly. If the teachings flow through a lineage of knowledgeable, enlightened gurus, they are authentic. If authentic, the transmission proceeds easily, with devotees being attracted to an honest source.

In this tradition, a disciple is authorized and empowered to initiate others by his or her guru, so that the transmission of teaching and spiritual force remains unadulterated. Lahiri Mahasaya said that if initiation is not given by an authorized person (that is, if one

merely presumes to be ready to initiate without first receiving permission from the guru), then it is not real initiation, but only empty instruction, without potency. There is no transmission of shakti or redemptive spiritual force, therefore, no real attunement with the guru lineage.

The mere learning of a more intricate meditation technique is not a guarantee that its practice will be effective. When initiated, the disciple becomes attuned to the guru lineage and the "waves" of blessing-grace which flow from them to the disciple are of extreme benefit. The blessing of the gurus is just as important as the practice of meditation techniques, if not more so, for many disciples have experienced illumination of consciousness because of their devotion to God and love for the gurus even when not proficient in the practice of meditation techniques. Without surrender to God, and without attunement to the gurus, practice of technique is mechanical. There is always the possibility, of course, that even mechanical practice of ritual may result in spontaneous kundalini awakening and the transformations that are necessary for one's soul qualities to blossom.

Advanced meditation techniques, beyond Kriya pranayama, may include the basic pranayama practice with the addition of specific "seed" mantras chanted at the higher chakras. Seed or *bija* mantras are those which activate the corresponding forces in the chakras, causing them to become influential. Faithful practice of Kriya pranayama will also awaken these forces, resulting in an expansion of awareness which enables the devotee to experience states of consciousness which are more cosmic or universal.

When I was with SRF, several of the young monks were interested in the possibility of attaining a breathless state of superconsciousness (samadhi), thinking this to be evidence of transcendental awareness. While it is true that one does experience minimal breathing and sometimes cessation of breathing when in deep meditation, this in itself does not mean that one is experiencing superconsciousness. It may be due to the fact that, when relaxed, oxygen needs are diminished and breathing requirements are reduced. One can experience superconscious states while normal physiological processes continue. During meditation, when breathing is slow and refined, physical functions are less likely to be distracting. Also, when

breathing is slow and refined, emotional states and mental actions are inclined to be more tranquil and orderly. Kriya pranayama balances prana flows, elicits relaxation, and clears the mental field so that meditative contemplation can proceed more easily. Indeed, when Kriya pranayama is practiced with concentrated attention, at the conclusion of practice meditation tends to flow spontaneously.

Besides regular meditation practice, remember to perfect the *yamas* and *niyamas*, the behaviors and practices which contribute, respectively, to harmonious outer relationships and inner transformation and growth. There is little value to being enthusiastic about meditation practices while neglecting self-responsible lifestyle routines and practices which can contribute to inner transformation.

I have been studying and practicing meditation for several years, yet progress seems slow. How long does it take to be enlightened? What should I do in the meantime?

The duration of time required to be enlightened is directly related to how quickly we can wake up. Until you know you are enlightened, live as though you were. Doing this is at least more enjoyable than viewing enlightenment as a distant possibility. It will also facilitate spiritual growth and make life more of an adventure.

While continuing to aspire to God-realization, and maintaining a study and meditation routine, extend yourself to serve in some way to awaken others and nurture the planet. This is what enlightened saints do, so why not emulate the demonstrated example of their lives? Selfless service dissolves ego-sense and purifies awareness. Since ego-fixation and clouded awareness are two primary obstacles to experiencing our already enlightened soul state, why not do something that will effectively remove these obstacles? Remember the statement in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (2:2): "Kriya Yoga is practiced to remove all physical and mental obstacles, for the purpose of realizing God." The everyday actions we implement to enhance our lives which make us more responsive to grace are kriyas which are as important as our metaphysical speculations and introverted meditative interludes.

When ego-sense (erroneous belief of independent selfhood) is absent, wholeness is experienced. When awareness is clear, Self-

realization is obvious. When behaviors and circumstances are ideal, enlightenment is validated.

A major obstacle to Self-realization is persistent belief in limitation. How do we think about ourselves—how do we *know* ourselves to be—during our occasions of self-examination? Do we think ourselves to be habit-bound, problem-ridden creatures? Or do we have a real sense of innate spiritual beingness with great potential? How we are, to ourselves, determines our modes of thinking, feeling, and behaviors. We *can*, by practice, train ourselves to adjust our self-view and self-awareness. We *can* learn to remove our awareness from limiting mental states. We *can* choose to avoid allowing ourselves to be subject to fluctuating moods. We *can*, if we choose to, and if we wisely use will power, effect useful changes in our states of consciousness that will enable us to see more clearly, act more rationally, and live more purposefully. We *can* actualize emotional maturity, which is essential to being able to live successfully and unfold spiritually.

What we can change for the better, we should. What we cannot change immediately, we can bear patiently until further psychological and spiritual growth is actualized. Being soul-content in the face of challenge is one of the recommended disciplines for devotees on the enlightenment path. By perfecting contentment (which is not the same as complacency) we avoid creating further psychological complications—a useful first step in the direction of mental and emotional wellness.

Are there special things we can do to nurture devotion and perhaps have better attunement with our line of gurus?

The primary act is to commit to living a dedicated, selfless life. This proves our devotion to the spiritual path. Living like this bridges the gap (which only exists in our mind and consciousness) between us and God. Let your every thought, feeling, and action be as "right" or "righteous" as is possible for you at any given moment and in every situation. You are then living the ideal life to the best of your ability, instead of hoping that you might some day be able to do it. When we feel ourselves to be apart from God or distant from our goal of God-awareness, we may do things with the idea that perhaps something will be effective, or that we will be changed for the better.

At this level, we are still looking toward an anticipated future-time event that will change us and our circumstances. A more direct way to get into stream of grace is by doing in the moment what we know to be in our best spiritual interest. As we do this, we soon discover that what we were once expecting to eventually occur, is being routinely experienced. Instead of being devotees striving on the path, we are enjoying naturally the outcomes of progressively unfolding realizations which are occurring spontaneously.

To improve attunement with the gurus, be open to and with them. Don't try to hide from them. Respect them and be thankful and appreciative for their teachings, support, and blessings. Feel them to be with you at all times; their minds blended with your mind, their consciousness merged with yours, their reality anchored with yours, in God. While being responsive to the help they offer, help them to fulfill their mission. The most obvious way to help them fulfill their purposes is to be a dedicated disciple and prove it by living in the right way. The waves of grace from God through the gurus are always flowing onto the shores of our consciousness. To the degree that we can be receptive to grace, our soul capacities are unfolded.

Read about the gurus, in my writings and the writings of Paramahansaji, to be informed about them. They are more than your spiritual guides—they are members of your senior spiritual family. I look upon Master as my spiritual father, Sri Yukteswar as my spiritual grandfather, Lahiri Mahasaya as my spiritual great grandfather, and Babaji as my spiritual great-great grandfather. Why, then, should I not love them and be devoted to the cause to which they are dedicated? Why should they not love me and ceaselessly share their love and blessings with me? Where there is communion, where there is love, *there*, will be grace and fulfillment.

A helpful thing you can do to improve your attunement with our gurus is to meditate more deeply on special occasions: on their birthdays, the anniversaries of their transition from the earth plane (their *mahasamadhi* or "great oneness" episode), and at other significant times. For this, remember them with special regard on these days and attune your mind and being with theirs as you meditate.

Put fresh a fresh flower on your home altar, near the photograph or likeness of the guru being honored. Light a candle. Pray to God

and mentally and spiritually attune yourself to the gurus, with special attention given to the guru whose day is being celebrated. Practice your meditation routine and sit for a long time in the silence, merged in God, aware of the living presence of the gurus.

It does not matter that any one of our gurus, other than Babaji, may be presently incarnated in another body. Be established in transcendental samadhi, or be involved with a mission in some astral, causal, or celestial realm. Your attunement with the gurus is attunement with God. That is the primary thing to remember. The gurus are a point of contact with Infinite Consciousness, from which your awareness can expand to omnipresence and absolute freedom.

Outer ritual now and then can help us to be more focused and intentional in our practices. When performing devotional rituals, be conscious of what you are doing and why you are doing it. This can be helpful to you as well as charge your meditation sanctuary with spiritual vitality. After the performance of your preferred ritual, turn within, practice Kriya Yoga meditation techniques, and meet the gurus and God on the inner planes. Superstitious, routine performance of ritual has some value to spiritually unawake devotees because it may provide a degree of support on the path. It can nurture devotion and inspire faith. Of superior value is ritual performed with knowledge, as a preliminary procedure, after which one goes beyond it to the contemplation of God without name or form.

Special Days to Remember

Meditate longer and more deeply on these days of the year. See the last forum theme of the text for recommended practices to improve your attunement with God and our gurus.

January 5 (1893): Birthday of Paramahansa Yogananda.

March 7 (1952): Paramahansa Yogananda's mahasamadhi.

March 9 (1936): Sri Yukteswar's mahasamadhi.

May 10 (1855): Birthday of Sri Yukteswar.

July 25 (1920): Paramahansaji's meeting with Mahavatar Babaji before departing India to begin his mission to the West.

September 26 (1895): Lahiri Mahasaya's mahasamadhi.

September 30 (1827): Birthday of Lahiri Mahasaya

Other Special Occasions: The holy day or season of your religious tradition; the anniversary of your initiation into Kriya Yoga practices; and any other day that is meaningful to you.

Note: Yogic tradition is that a guru's mahasamadhi day is of greater significance than birthdays. If the guru is still embodied, his or her birthday, and the day of your initiation by your guru are the special events to celebrate. These can also be useful times for brother and sister Kriya initiates to gather for quiet meditation, after which food may be shared.

Addendum

Please Help Me Make this Work More Effective

As a disciple on this path, you know how meaningful it is. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women all over the world who could benefit from these teachings and practices. The need is twofold: 1) How to let them know this clear teaching and these helpful practices are available; 2) How to present them so that they are understood and effective.

Everyone, whether they consciously know it or not, needs to learn about God-realization possibilities. Of course, not everyone will be receptive at this time, but many would be—and they are the ones to whom we need to reach out, and serve.

We start right where we are, with ourselves and with each other. It is up to us to be self-motivated to live with alert intention, maintain our regular spiritual practices, and share—with each other and all who are attuned to this path—our supportive good will and cooperation. It is a mistake to assume that members of the Kriya Yoga family must be small in numbers. Large numbers, without dedication to the path are of little value, but larger numbers of sincerely practicing Kriya yogis would be a blessing because it would mean that many more souls were on their awakening way.

Babaji predicted the spread of this work. He permitted Lahiri Mahasaya to teach Kriya practices on a broader basis to prepared devotees. He affirmed an interest in the global spread of the work when he discussed the matter with Sri Yukteswar in 1894. He said that he sent Paramahansaji to the West to open doors. Since 1861 the groundwork has been done and the foundation established for the major unfoldment yet to come. Paramahansaji told me, and others, "In the future, millions will come to this path!" True to his prophecy, many more are being attracted. Not all are sufficiently prepared to understand the teaching or to practice the principles, but they are at least demonstrating interest. Out of the many who are

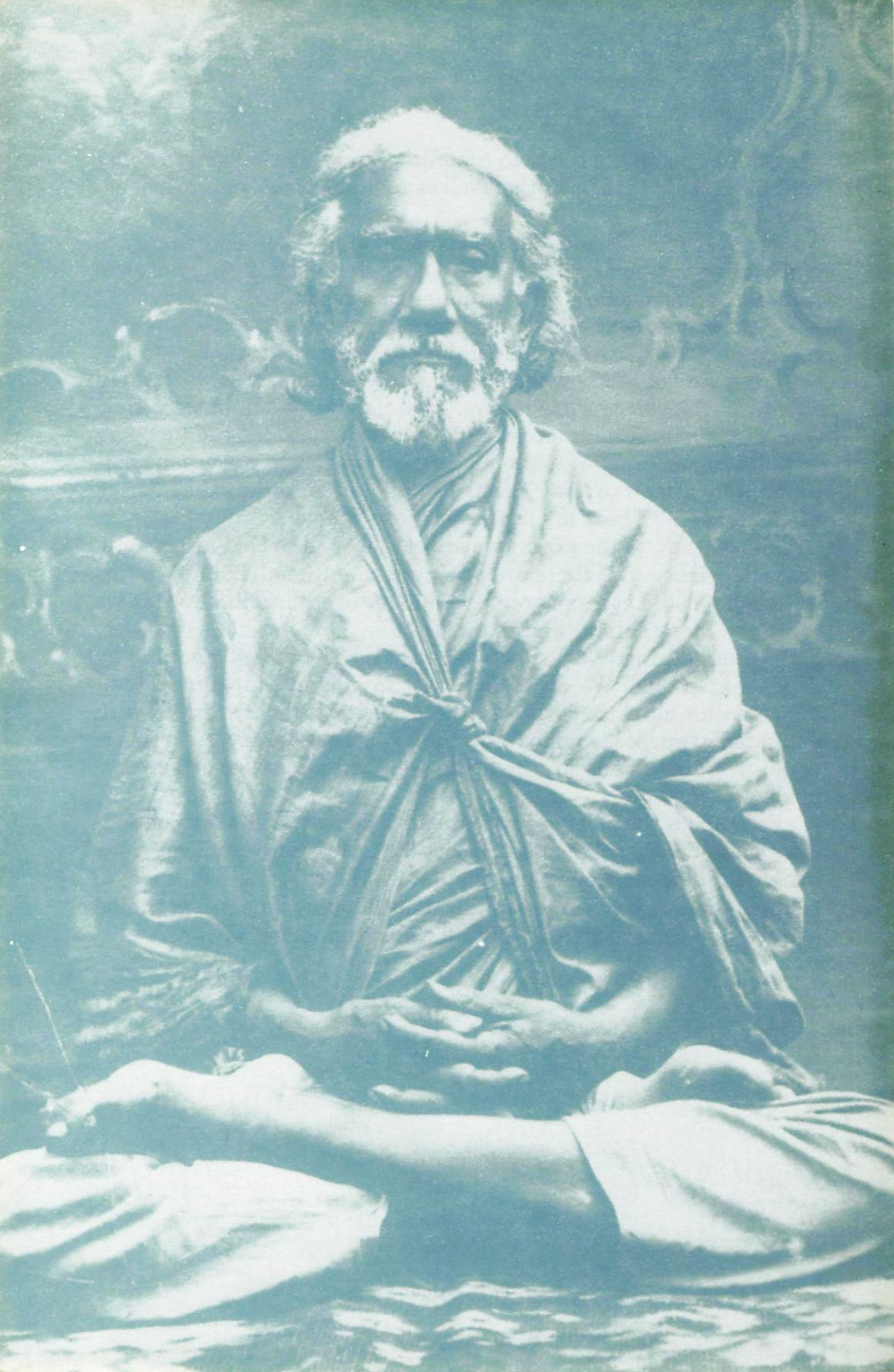
responding, some are ready to commit to knowing God and to doing what is necessary to open themselves to higher levels of consciousness.

For over four decades I have given all of my time and energy to making these teachings available. Our outer work, through literature and other means, will continue. However, I will be traveling less, and will be focusing more on seminars and retreats where sincerely interested truth seekers gather to learn and practice.

What I need to know from you is how to make this work more effective—for you and for others. How can we reach more people who will be sincerely interested? How can we present the teaching so that it is meaningful to them? How can we support everyone better as they attend to their practices and duties so that they derive utmost benefit? These are some questions I have.

I know that, to the extent we are established in God-awareness, grace flourishes. But there are practical, intentional, helpful things we can do also. Let's explore possibilities together and do what we can to be more helpful and more effective. Our mission is service: giving, not getting. We do not want to gather a band of emotionally dependent people. We want to attract intelligent, functional individuals who have the will and the capacity to learn to live with enlightened purpose and to fulfill their spiritual purposes. As this is done, personal needs are met and worthwhile endeavors accomplished.

Pray about the matter. Meditate until you are still, then contemplate possibilities. Use the enclosed form to share with me your insights and ideas. Your participation will be very helpful to me, to members of our Kriya Yoga family, and to many who are yet to be attracted to this work and will find a spiritual home with us.



Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

April – June 1995 Number 4

Light on the Path

THE KRIYA YOGA TRADITION: A WORLD VIEW

One hundred thirty-four years ago, Mahavatar Babaji permitted Lahiri Mahasaya to more openly offer the knowledge and practices of Kriya Yoga to sincere seekers of truth. After moderate, progressive growth, the Kriya Yoga message is now spreading rapidly. It is important that the teachings and the transmission of *shakti* (vital force that is imparted) remain pure if this work is to remain effective.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Open discussion with initiates to provide meaningful answers to relevant questions and clear explanations of the principles and practices of Kriya Yoga. Participation invited.

Publisher's Note

This publication is produced quarterly for initiate disciples of the Kriya Yoga tradition. Most readers were initiated by me, but individuals who were initiated by another ordained representative of the guru line of Mahavatar Babaji to Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors, are welcome to be included.

Because this information is for initiates of the Kriya Yoga tradition, please keep it confidential. You may, of course, share it with others you may know who are also Kriya initiates. If you know others who are sincerely interested in learning about this path, refer them to a qualified source for instruction.

If you are a Kriya initiate and a brother or sister disciple on the path shared this issue of *Radiance* with you, you are cordially invited to refer to the information at the bottom of this page to subscribe for yourself.

Note: please use the form mailed with each issue to participate in the forum dialogue section of the magazine. Your questions or comments will be useful in helping me know of your needs and interests, and may be helpful to other readers.

Front Cover Photo: The altar in the Meditation Hall at CSA headquarters.

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THE KRIYA YOGA TRADITION: A WORLD VIEW

When referring to the Kriya Yoga tradition in this article, I am emphasizing the one I represent through my relationship with Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Yukteswar, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Mahavatar Babaji. The words *kriya* and *yoga* are generic, pertaining to or describing a philosophical system or process rather than being a trademark or a trade name. In yogic literature these words are commonly used to refer to actions and processes which are instrumental in removing physical and mental restrictions to spiritual growth, and which facilitate spiritual growth.

In the West, until well after the middle of this century, Kriya Yoga was primarily associated with the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda because of his extensive public outreach. Within the last twenty years or so, because more yoga teachers from India have traveled to Europe and America, and because more Europeans and Americans have visited India to study with teachers there, the words Kriya Yoga to designate a teaching emphasis are increasingly seen in advertisements in which yoga practices are promoted. While anyone has the right to the use of the words, and to teach as they feel led to teach, not all "Kriya Yoga" teachers represent our line of gurus, nor need they. They may represent another lineage, or none at all if they have insight.

Remember that *kriya* means action, and *yoga* means the process (or processes) used to facilitate wellness, function, and awareness of oneness or wholeness—as well as the final condition of soul unfoldment: God-realization. So long as yoga in any form is clearly and honestly taught, the results can only be beneficial. When speaking about other purehearted yoga teachers (as well as to some who weren't so purehearted) Paramahansa Yogananda often said, "The world is a big place, and there is room in it for everyone." However, while honoring others who were making a useful contribution to the spiritual welfare of people, Master always emphasized the teaching

approach he had come to present. He never said his approach was the only way; he often said it was a direct way for those who were called to it and chose to live it.

Kriya Yoga, then, is the core teaching and practice of all authentic enlightenment traditions. Anyone who regulates physical and mental impulses, contemplates higher realities, and endeavors to live so that egoism can be dissolved in favor of enhanced soul awareness, is practicing Kriya Yoga. One is not asked to embrace Hinduism to be a devotee of this path. One is only advised to live a natural, purposeful life while being dedicated to spiritual unfoldment leading to Self-knowledge and God-realization. *Unique to our tradition are the specific meditation techniques which are taught.* Lahiri Mahasaya learned a variety of meditation techniques from Mahavatar Babaji during his two week stay with him in 1861, then taught the ones he felt were most suitable for devotees to learn and effectively practice. Sri Yukteswar taught these procedures to his disciples, including Paramahansa Yogananda, who taught them to his students and disciples.

When Paramahansaji left India for America in 1920, Sri Yukteswar talked with him on the boat before it departed. He blessed Master's mission and advised him to emphasize the essence of *The Holy Science* (Sri Yukteswar's book written at Babaji's request) when teaching students—which Master always did.

During my guru's years of active teaching, only a few whom he taught apprehended his spiritual state. Many saw him only as a very pleasant, innovative teacher of yoga principles. Others felt his spiritual force but did not really comprehend his depth of God-realization. A few who did, experienced not only the flow of soul power from him, but also degrees of direct transmission of his realization according to their receptivity. He would say, "I give you everything; it is up to you to prepare yourself to receive it."

Being receptive to this teaching, and to the more subtle currents of spiritual force which are imparted through the gurus, is of primary value. To be receptive, we have to be willing to listen and learn, and intelligent (discerning) enough to apprehend what is taught. We have to be intuitive, for subjective realities cannot be completely grasped even by the keenest intellect. It is also helpful to be physiologically healthy, with a refined nervous system, because when dormant soul forces awaken within us they are experienced in the

body. While embodied, we are spirit-mind-body beings, and a healthy body and well-ordered mental processes enable us to more efficiently actualize our awakened soul capacities.

Physical and mental impairments, and emotional conflicts, are obstacles to Self-realization. Physical health can be improved by constructive thinking and by health-nurturing, life-enhancing routines. Mental health can be improved by education, rational thinking, and regular meditation practice. Emotional conflicts can be resolved by insightful self-analysis and purposeful living. They can also be resolved by improving understanding of oneself, coming to terms with life as it is, minimizing self-centeredness, and self-responsible behavior.

Everything we can do to help ourselves to be healthier and more functional is spiritual practice. This practical approach to living is mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras* (2:2): "Kriya Yoga is practiced to weaken and eliminate all physical and mental obstacles for the purpose of realizing God." Therefore, when we live with intentional purpose, cultivate optimism and rational thinking, choose a healthy lifestyle, are wise in the selection of our social activities and associates, and use our creative abilities and energies constructively, we are practicing Kriya Yoga just as attentively as we are when we engage in philosophical contemplation and meditation practice. For a Kriya yogi, everything one does is for a constructive purpose.

If we are not doing our honest best to live a wholesome, purposeful, soul-aware life, we are not intent upon the spiritual path—we are only superficially interested. The results of what we do are evidence of our intentions and actions.

Two obstacles to spiritual growth, which are not always given enough attention, are *insufficiently developed intellectual powers* and *emotional immaturity*. Every soul yearns to be restored to Self-knowledge, to experience God, and be free. Even if desire for knowledge and spiritual growth is present, if intellectual capacities are not developed and if emotional immaturity confines awareness, soul unfoldment may be restricted. I know this by my observation of others and by personal experience.

When I first went to Paramahansaji, in 1949, I was eighteen years of age. Until then I had lived in a rural community in northern Ohio, with only minimal knowledge and no personal experience of the world beyond that region. What general information I had

acquired about world events and varied philosophical theories was acquired from people in the community, and from newspapers, magazines, books, and radio broadcasts. Thankfully, my devotion to the spiritual path was unwavering and an innate ability to discern truth from untruth was helpful. Except for the first two or three months at Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters, I had no interactions with any of the other members of the monastic community because Paramahansa assigned me to the Phoenix, Arizona, SRF center for work duties and spiritual practice under his direction.

I was in Arizona during the remaining three and one-half years that I was with the organization, except for occasional visits to California to see Master or to attend special functions. Therefore, my *sadhana* (Sanskrit, from verb-root *sadh*, "to go straight to the goal"), my spiritual practice, was self-chosen as inspired by Master's words and personal example. I vividly remember those early morning and late evening hours of extended meditation practice to which I was committed while at the Phoenix SRF center in the early 1950s. During those many months I became acquainted with subjective realms of mind and consciousness revealed by inner perception. Spontaneous superconscious unfoldments occurred from time to time—usually during prolonged interludes of patient sitting, after practicing Kriya meditation techniques. Experience (along with soul-unfolded knowledge) provided an understanding of subtle, astral anatomy, of the chakras and flows of prana. Sometimes, episodes of a more cosmic character were experienced, as well as intuitive insights and occasional precognitive, superconscious visions.

Once, while meditating, it seemed that I was in a room with many people. At the far end of the room was a casket. Inexperienced with subjective perceptions at the time, and not thinking to actually look in the casket, I mistakenly presumed that I was previewing Master's funeral service. Later that day, when I telephoned the Los Angeles SRF headquarters and inquired about Master's well-being, I was informed that he was well. Approximately two weeks later, Master telephoned the Phoenix center and talked with Herbert Freed, who was then the minister. He reported that Sister Gyanamata, a senior disciple, had made her transition, and requested that we travel to the SRF center at Encinitas, California, to attend the memorial service. A few days later, at the evening memorial service in the Hermitage building overlooking the Pacific ocean, I became aware of

the fact that all of the details of the event were the same as my prior dream-vision; the exception being that Master, radiant in God-consciousness, was presiding.

While glimpses into subtle aspects of life were interesting during my early months with Master, the need to become more familiar with the mundane realm and to function effectively in it, could only be satisfied by practical endeavor and experience. I discovered, as many on the spiritual path do, that one can enjoy awareness of higher realities and still have to learn to successfully relate to everyday circumstances.

Even with preliminary superconscious perceptions (all such perceptions are preliminary to the state of full enlightenment), our subconscious conditionings (Sanskrit, *samskaras*, "impressions, memories"—usually with potential to influence) can continue to fragment and disturb our awareness, and somewhat determine our moods and behaviors. Also, we have a twofold purpose for being in this world: we are here to learn to successfully relate to it while rendering useful service, and we are here to awaken in God.

I have mentioned in other writings that, a few months after I met Paramahansaji, he told me, "When you came to me God took fifty percent of your karma, guru's grace takes twenty-five percent, and the rest you have to work out yourself." He was not, of course, referring to exact percentages, but was explaining that when one commits to the spiritual path God's redemptive grace flows more easily and directly through available agents. From the beginning of my spiritual quest in this incarnation, knowledge of God and of subjective realms has unfolded spontaneously, while the practical matter of learning how to live effectively and successfully has been blessed by grace as well as has required my personal endeavors to learn and apply what was learned. God and gurus can more obviously bless us when we are willing to open our lives to the flows of blessings by applying ourselves in practical ways with concentrated purpose.

As we become more discerning and insightful, and more Self or soul-directed, the contents of unconscious and subconscious aspects of the mind become less influential. Attention given to apprehending the existence and character of subconscious conditionings, intentional endeavors to live correctly, and regular meditation practice, can bring these impressions to the conscious level. They can

then be examined, and either allowed to express so that their motive force is exhausted, or controlled and renounced. The conditionings, tendencies, and habits rooted in the mind comprise what is sometimes referred to as the shadow or dark side of our personality. Thus, until we are fully enlightened, although we may demonstrate sattvic or bright characteristics, we may also have rajasic (restless) and tamasic (heavy, dull) characteristics yet to cleanse from mind and body.

Small-mindedness and lethargy—characteristic of people whose intellectual powers are undeveloped and who are deficient in curiosity and desire to learn and to grow—are obstacles to soul unfoldment. The progress of many truth seekers is restricted because of these conditions. Some seem not to improve during the course of one physical incarnation, while others—because of determined action or because of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth that progressively occurs—do demonstrate constructive changes. This condition is more generally observed among lower and middle class social groups, although it is often present among members of the so-called upper class. Two characteristics of it are poor self-esteem and a compelling belief that all one can hope for is to be average or normal. There may also be a learning disability—which can be corrected or compensated for—or one may have difficulty concentrating. Word comprehension may be inadequate. A tendency to associate with others who are also underachievers may reinforce the condition. The primary problem is ego-identification; not egotism which may be expressed as willfulness or arrogance, but being fixated in and attached to one's awareness of individual selfhood.

One thing is certain: because we are spiritual beings we can, if we aspire to do so, help ourselves experience higher states of consciousness and overcome all psychological obstacles. Many devotees, aware of their shortcomings and perhaps overwhelmed by them, give up too soon. Or they may decide that they are not intelligent enough to understand "higher truths," asserting that, for them, the way of devotion to God and belief in the teaching is the best. Devotion is powerfully helpful on the spiritual path, and belief in the teachings of saints has value, but what is more useful is to pursue knowledge while being devoted to God, and to learn to demonstrate the validity of what is taught by saints. Even if quietly devotional, to be successful on the spiritual path one needs to have soul-aspiration and per-

sistence to accomplish worthwhile purposes. Without these, one may drift through life as inclined by moods or whims, and with circumstances.

While it is useful for all people to know about Kriya Yoga and to practice the recommended how-to-live regimens, our cause—which is the enlightenment of the individual and the planet—is not well served merely by working at the level of meeting human needs. I envision a dramatic increase in numbers of more awake, purposeful, dedicated Kriya yogis coming to the fore and being creatively involved with our movement—some as CSA members, and others who may not be members, but all understanding that as disciples on the path we are one in the Spirit of God, with or without organizational affiliation.

As of now, thousands of men and women in many countries of the world consider themselves to be devotees on the Kriya Yoga path. They read the basic books and other available materials from CSA, SRF, and other organized groups, attend group meetings when possible, and attend to their personal practices. Of these, most whom I meet (those initiated by me excepted, of course) are blind believers without much evidential display of valid insight. Usually, they are not demonstrating success in their everyday circumstances and relationships, and are not very prosperous. I am sure (let us pray it is so), that there are many Kriya yogis who, unknown to us, are quietly living in God and effectively fulfilling their spiritual destiny.

One of the problems is that of learning how to integrate what we know to be the best way to live, and our spiritual practices, into everyday life. This problem is not so challenging if one is completely committed to the path, for then one will daily study philosophical principles and regard regular meditation practice as the chosen routine to provide a secure foundation for living. Halfhearted involvement yields but marginal results. More focused attention to essential details yields more satisfying results. Resolved participation allows Self-knowledge to unfold and soul qualities to blossom.

Our innate urge to have awareness restored to wholeness—to Self-knowledge and God-realization—becomes increasingly influential to the degree that we cooperate with it. When we allow ourselves to become overly involved with self-centered thoughts, feelings, relationships, and activities, our attention becomes mixed with outer circumstances and soul awareness is, to varying degrees,

obscured. One of the basic teachings of yoga is this: *When we are soul-centered, we are peaceful; when we are not soul-centered, our awareness tends to become involved with externals. By training ourselves to be soul-centered at all times, we can relate to the world with insightful understanding.* This is the simple secret of spiritual Self-mastery, which is the master key to awakening to liberation of consciousness.

Let us always keep in the forefront of our awareness that the primary purpose of Kriya Yoga practice is to awaken to full knowledge and experience (realization) of our true nature. Our practice can be helpful in providing us a more fulfilled human experience, to be sure, but a fulfilled human condition is only preliminary to authentic spiritual growth. To consider a relationship with this tradition as one might consider one with an organized religious tradition—that is, useful for its emotional support and as something to identify with that provides a degree of comfort—is to mistake its real value and possibly remain untouched by the power that can flow from it. Yet, this is what many people do: they feel themselves to belong to the Kriya tradition even though they are not always attentive to living its practices. Some even mistakenly believe themselves to be assured of salvation because of their mild devotion to God and the gurus, whether they endeavor to "live the ideal life" or not.

When you were initiated into Kriya Yoga, if all conditions were ideal, you were connected with the consciousness and vital force flowing through Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, and whoever initiated you. You were given how-to-live instructions along with instruction on the practice of specific meditation procedures, and your soul forces were enlivened at a subtle level. You now have but to live an intentional, purposeful life, practice meditation, and nurture the vital force so that it can become increasingly pronounced in its actions. As a result, physical and mental obstacles will be removed and spiritual growth greatly accelerated.

One does not usually experience satisfactory progress without commitment to the practice of recommended procedures (the kriyas or constructive actions). And until all actions are spontaneously appropriate, review of procedures should be frequent, starting with the *yamas* or self-regulated actions (harmlessness; truthfulness;

honesty; conservation and constructive use of vital forces; and nonattachment), and the *niyamas* or intentional practices (contentment in all circumstances; internal and external cleanliness, or purity; discipline of body, senses, and mind; analysis and contemplation of higher realities; and surrender in God, demonstrated by willingness to live in harmony with natural laws and to live constructively without self-centered motives).

The first action to implement is that of adjusting the point of view so that circumstances are perceived from soul awareness rather than from a conditioned mind viewpoint. Instead of looking *to* the ideal of spiritual awareness, look *from* there as you examine your relationship with circumstances and choose how to proceed to order your affairs. Even if soul awareness is not clear to you, at least *assume* yourself to be a spiritual being with abilities which enable you to control your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Be willing to be in command of your states of consciousness, mental states, behaviors, and actions and responses. You can, if you choose to.

Weak-willed people declare themselves to be victims of circumstances, whether external or internal. When will power is quietly dynamic, accurate perception is consistent and decisiveness in making choices is easy. We do not want to confuse pure will power (soul intention) with egocentric willfulness, which may be motivated by insecurity and nurtured by arrogance. One of the *siddhis* (innate soul abilities) is that of mastery of the elements by an act of intention. Body, mind, and external things and conditions, are comprised of the primary elements of nature and are, therefore, subject to the soul's focused intention.

Some of the side-benefits of choosing to adhere to a scheduled regimen of diet, exercise, study, and meditation practice, is that willingly doing these things strengthens our will power, increases Self (soul)-confidence, and enables us to more easily make right choices in everyday circumstances. Also, regularity in regard to constructive behaviors helps to coordinate the subtle governing principles which regulate flows of life force in the body and balance biological functions. We are then more likely to be physically well and mentally and emotionally stable.

One of the reasons why some spiritual aspirants find it difficult to do the things they know would be helpful for them is that they do not always feel physically, mentally, or emotionally well. When we

are physically vibrant, mentally keen, and emotionally stable, we can more easily accomplish our purposes and comfortably relate to outer circumstances. Spiritual growth occurs more easily and quickly.

The Kriya Yoga "idea" is already established in the minds of many people around the world. What is needed now is for Kriya initiates to be encouraged and motivated to demonstrate or actualize (manifest as real) what they have the potential to express. This will remove the teaching from the realm of "what can be" and bring it to fruition here and now, so it will be dynamically influential in the lives of participants and in the affairs of those who are secondarily benefited.

Paramahansaji always advised disciples to change themselves for the better first, before trying to help others to experience beneficial change. Until we have experienced the transformative results of right living and right spiritual practice, our endeavors to help others to a higher, improved way of life, will be ineffectual. We cannot give to others what we do not have. We cannot impart nonexistent or flawed knowledge. We cannot live in the light of higher understanding until delusions and illusions are absent from our consciousness. We cannot even pray effectively for others until we have awakened to at least some degree of God-relationship.

The philosophical life-knowledge that we have and the procedures that we know, when wisely and diligently applied, can be the means of our own illumination of consciousness and aid in quickening the spiritual evolution of the multitudes—on Planet Earth and in subtle realms—now and for thousands of years yet to emerge on the screen of space-time.

Dialogue

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are those requested by readers of this publication. Please use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in our quarterly open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of all who will peruse these pages in the months ahead.

Several inquiries about practicing some of the Kriya meditation techniques were received since the last issue of *Radiance* was published. Although a few of the following themes may have been covered in earlier issues, it can be helpful to review them.

a. *Basic Kriya Pranayama* – Two readers asked whether breathing is done through the mouth or through the nostrils. We sometimes teach that breathing is done with the mouth partially open when first learning the process in order to learn to feel the cool air sensation in the lower throat with inhalation. Once the procedure is learned, breathing is done through the nostrils while feeling the air against the back of the throat as though sucking the current up: the suction is felt in the spinal pathway. Gentle, patient practice will yield results. Pull the current smoothly up from the base of the spine, through the chakras, into the crown chakra—while looking into the spiritual eye. Awareness includes the spinal pathway, spiritual eye, and crown chakra while practicing the prescribed number of times, or as inclined. After the final upward flow, forget the breath, focusing at the spiritual eye while simultaneously aware in the crown chakra, and relax into the tranquil silence of meditation. It is not necessary to specifically direct the flow as it reaches the brain. Just by pulling the current upward, it will flow naturally through the

nadis or prana pathways.

One can experiment with Kriya Pranayama practice until results are satisfying. One recommendation is to draw the current into the spiritual eye, then let it *flow back through the brain* and down the spinal pathway. Feel a *warm flow ascending* and a *cool flow descending*. Some find it more effective to feel the warmth (and energy) flowing *upward through the chakras* with inhalation and to feel the *cool downward flow* of current as though *flowing over the back of the spine*. The current moves within the spinal pathway, and any practice we can implement to increase spinal awareness is helpful.

One reader said that imagining the current ascending and descending through the spinal pathway was difficult for her. The solution: give attention to *feeling* the current flowing, rather than trying to visualize it. Even if no sensation is felt, practice anyway. Always practice Kriya meditation techniques with your heart overflowing with love for God and the gurus. After technique practice, contemplate omnipresence and the field of absolute, transcendental Existence-Being.

b. *Hong Sau Mantra Practice* – Several readers asked if Hong Sau mantra could be practiced during the day, other than during the regular meditation practice session. Paramahansaji sometimes recommended that it be done at any time during a quiet interlude, for the purpose of centering. While sitting at your desk during a lull at work, with family or friends, at any time when your attention is not otherwise fully engaged, and with eyes open so that no one else knows of your inner work, you can let the mantra flow along with the breathing rhythm. Such practice will have a calming effect on the mind.

Another useful time to do it is when you awaken in the middle of the night. Lie still, let the breath flow and listen to the mantra until you experience a meditative state or go back to sleep.

Using the technique at these times is not a substitute for its practice during regular meditation sessions, when you want to be alert and attentive to the unfoldment of superconscious states.

Remember Paramahansaji's frequent mention of the fact that meditation techniques are but "tools" we use to regulate mental, emotional, and physical conditions and are preliminary to sponta-

neous superconscious states that unfold. Learn to use the techniques effectively, then transcend them. Avoid being attached to mechanical practice. Also, avoid rigid attitudes about practice. Some Kriya practitioners (some Kriya teachers, too) are so obsessed with performance of technique that they neglect to expand their awareness beyond it. While it is helpful to learn and do things in the most useful way, we want to be universal in outlook, rather than be foolishly small-minded.

I have met devotees who have faithfully but mechanically practiced Kriya meditation routines for many years, who, as indicated by their personal testimony and habitual behaviors, seem not to have experienced much spiritual growth. Sometimes, in such instances, the problem is not that they are insincere or inattentive to procedure, but that they are self-centered and narrow-minded. They should review the yamas and niyamas and become proficient in actualizing them. This would do more to facilitate soul unfoldment than mechanical practice of meditation techniques.

c. *Hatha Yoga / Meditation Practice Routine* – One reader asked about the usefulness of preceding Kriya meditation practice with a Hatha Yoga routine. This is optional. If one enjoys practicing Hatha Yoga prior to meditation practice, it is a good idea to conclude the routine with the more gentle, relaxing asanas or mudras. The ones which improve spinal flexibility and encourage enlivening of the chakras are good to use. Maha Mudra is suitable to do just before sitting to meditate (do it with the Kriya pranayama, as instructed when initiated). One might also include simple pranayama practice (such as alternate nostril breathing) after sitting, and before the practice of regular Kriya meditation techniques.

Be sure to balance meditation practice with intentional, purposeful, skillful, effective, living routines. Learn to be soul-content in everything that you do. Concentrate more on accomplishment, in favor of being too concerned with overcoming obstacles or solving problems. Living successfully banishes all obstacles and removes awareness from circumstances in which problems can arise.

– Continued next page

Other comments and questions were:

As a Catholic, I am concerned about following this guru line. My master is Jesus. I am devoted to the enlightenment path—however, I experience mental and emotional conflict since I will only consider Jesus as my guru. Is he considered to be one of the gurus in the Kriya Yoga tradition? If not, how should I resolve this matter so that I can continue my spiritual practices with peace of mind?

A similar question might be asked by one who is of any religious faith, or who feels a soul-felt relationship with another saint or illumined master, yet feels drawn to yoga practices. It is not necessary to change gurus, or renounce one's preferred religious tradition or practices which nurture the soul, to be a Kriya initiate. What is more important is devotion to God and commitment on the spiritual path. One is *ishtadevata* (Sanskrit, *ish*, "to wish, seek" and *devata*, "divinity") or chosen aspect or form of God is a matter of the heart. However God is worshipped, soul-to-God relationship occurs. A Christian, Buddhist, Moslem, Jew, and devotee of any faith or tradition, can be true to that which satisfies the soul. In this instance, if one becomes a Kriya Yoga initiate, the gurus of this tradition can be considered as saints who are helpful on one's chosen or destined spiritual path.

Babaji initiated many disciples of other traditions, as did Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. I also do this when an applicant is sincere on the enlightenment path. In India, it is usual for saints of any tradition to be considered as agents of the divine. When Paramahansaji came to this country in 1920 he was aware that most Americans were already familiar with the Christian tradition and did not ask them to forsake it if they found it satisfying. Jesus, Buddha, and masters of other enlightenment traditions, while not formally related to our guru line, are considered to be illumined souls with whom all masters share oneness of spiritual realization in common, and world-redemption influence.

As the devotee's soul unfoldment progresses, it will be seen that as and behind all outer forms, only God exists. That which is of the personality will be transcended and the true, cosmic reality of what is behind the personality or image will be directly known and experienced. All enlightened men and women direct the attention of devotees to God. Paramahansaji did this: he always told us that, as he

knew God, he wanted us to know God for ourselves. Teachers can show the way, encourage us, and even share with us their understanding to the degree that we are able to comprehend it, but only God's grace can be influential in assisting us to liberation of consciousness.

It is helpful to have the guidance of an embodied enlightened teacher, if such a relationship is available, because learning is much easier when direct communication is possible. To reject such an opportunity when a legitimate one is offered to us, or to erroneously conclude that we can receive accurate telepathic instructions from a master dwelling in subtle realms, is to invite difficulties on the path. We should not diminish ourselves by assuming an attitude of inferiority, or deny our innate ability to use our intellectual and intuitive powers to discern truth. What is best is an open-minded attitude, without being gullible or subject to deception (see below).

I have heard that only a "perfect master" can awaken our soul capacities and show us the way to spiritual freedom. Is this true? If so, should I seek one out? How can I recognize one?

This teaching is based on the usefulness of having personal contact with an enlightened person so that valid information about higher realities and the spiritual path can be acquired, and for the purpose of having soul qualities awakened. The most reliable way to proceed is to attend to your right living and spiritual practice routines, to prepare yourself for learning and for spiritual growth. You will then be led to the most ideal relationships for you, and events will unfold to allow you to have the support and nurturing that you need. To embark upon a "perfect master shopping expedition" will merely distract you from your high purpose, which is to awaken to Self-knowledge and to know and experience God directly.

One cannot recognize an enlightened soul until intelligence and intuition is keen. Until then, avid seekers usually tend to rely upon anecdotal accounts (stories and claims reported by others), or become emotionally infatuated with charismatic personalities who are promoted by themselves or others as being enlightened. There is no spiritual value in such involvements. There may be a marginal "enlightenment experience" when one suddenly realizes that their present approach to understanding is futile. I'm sorry to have to say

it, but the metaphysical-spiritual-growth-enlightenment marketplace is flooded with naive, emotion-driven, intellectually deficient truth seekers—as well as with unenlightened teachers with some knowledge but whose shadow side (flawed character and all that goes with it) makes them untrustworthy. There are, thankfully, some saints.

Every few months—so it seems—a new "perfect master, avatar, world teacher, or messiah figure" is promoted as having come on the scene to enlighten humankind and usher in the Golden Age. I recently read a published announcement featuring a woman from India who is being headlined as "the most advanced spiritual teacher of the century." Another promotion brochure describes a "Kriya Yoga master" from India who is "the most highly God-realized representative of this tradition alive today" and who "has attained absolute or final illumination of consciousness." And, of course, he offers the only "authentic" Kriya Yoga teaching presently available. Some "enlightened masters" can, supposedly, awaken a person's kundalini by a touch, glance, or an act of will. They are said to be able to "show one the light" and "connect the seeker to God." They are featured as being able to do all manner of marvelous things—but seldom, if ever, do. There is, too often, obvious hyperbole ("hype," English slang term for exaggerated, extravagant, often misleading claims) used to attract souls to their higher good—but these claims are not themselves compatible with the virtues of honesty, ethics, and morality which are the foundation supports of the spiritual growth path.

We *can* experience mental calm, soul peace, awakening of vital forces, and subtle perceptions in the presence (or with the assistance) of a fully, spiritually awake person, and be blessed by their wise counsel and inspired to emulate their ideal behaviors. We can also experience these occurrences in the presence of someone who is only partially, spiritually awake: then be confused when what is taught or done by the person is inconsistent with what we know to be true or right. At all times, therefore, we have to be discerning.

Is it necessary to be celibate on the spiritual path? Are sexual desires, urges, and/or expressions obstacles to spiritual growth? How can this urge be regulated?

If one chooses to be celibate, or if circumstances require it, one can continue to live a sane, healthy, productive life. However, celi-

bacy is not a requirement for success on the spiritual path. The main thing is to live a natural, intentional, purposeful life while aspiring to awakened spiritual consciousness and to knowledge and experience of God. One's personal affairs will then be more harmoniously ordered and compulsive desires or tendencies to obsessive behaviors of any kind will more easily be regulated.

Whatever is natural can be allowed. Whatever causes psychological, physical, or circumstantial hardship should be avoided. Paramahansaji recommended celibacy for members of the monastic community. For married disciples he sometimes gave personal, private advice: usually, to love and nurture each other, and attend to right living regimens and spiritual practices. When this is done, personal relationships are likely to be agreeable without rigid adherence to rules of conduct.

One spiritually advanced brother disciple told me that, when he met Master in the early 1930s, he was advised, when engaged in sexual intercourse with his wife, to be conscious of directing the energy upward through the chakras. In this way the nervous system could be enlivened and ascending prana flows would somewhat neutralize the outgoing energy flows ordinarily characteristic of the sexual experience. Lahiri Mahasaya advised his married male disciples in the same way. Both men and women may practice this.

If the sex urge is troublesome and needs to be regulated, it can be done in several ways. Be moderate in all activities: avoid excessive eating, too much sleep, restless activity, and the company of others whose habits are unregulated. Don't feed the mind with thoughts which are disturbing. Practice Kriya Yoga pranayama regularly. Exercise adequately. Cultivate all of the sattvic or elevating mental, emotional, and physical qualities. Live with intentional purpose so that energies are directed to constructive ends. Avoid having conflicts about natural urges. Renounce feelings of guilt, if this is a challenge. Just live a balanced, healthy, constructive life.

Now and then, in the newspapers or on television, we are informed that some Catholic priests or a members of the swami order (both of which have taken vows of celibacy), have been discovered to have had—or are having—a sexual relationship. A healthier choice would be for them to simply affirm their preference to live in relationship with a mate, and do it. If we don't consider natural biological functions to be a problem, they won't be.

And we don't have to speculate about whether or not God approves or disapproves of our normal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Trillions of creatures and billions of humans have sexual characteristics and behaviors. Organic life would not exist, nor could it persist, without them. A more cosmic view of life, along with expanded awareness and practical lifestyle routines, is all that is necessary to get along effectively in this world while continuing to experience authentic spiritual growth.

Two questions: 1) Should a new initiate sit for a long time in meditation?; 2) How to relate to mental pictures that surface during meditation?

Beginning meditators can start with a 30 minute routine once or twice a day. The reason for this is to assure that practice is alert and attentive. After several weeks, whenever inclined to do so, the meditation session can run as long as practice is conscious and of interest. Once in the flow of meditation, the session will proceed spontaneously. Depth of experience is more important than the duration of the meditation session. Of course, you will have to sit long enough to settle down and experience a degree of mental calm and inner peace. Meditate for as long as you want to, so long as you are alert and practice is enjoyable.

As to the mental pictures: these are due to restlessness and because of continuing mental transformations. Ignore them, giving attention to practice of Kriya Yoga techniques, then surrender in meditation while contemplating absolute, pure, existence. Don't try to analyze mental pictures or consider them to be induced by memories of previous incarnations. Transcend all relative perceptions. Refuse to be satisfied with anything less than clear awareness and realization of wholeness. Gently persist.

What is "mental perversity," how does it influence us, and how can we overcome it?

When we are *perverse* we tend to purposely deviate from what is appropriate or correct and obstinately persist in doing things we know are not useful or constructive. We are disposed to contradict because of habit or willfulness, and enjoy being in opposition to

another person's point of view even when we know it is right or may have value. There is probably no single cause for mental perversity. When I was a boy, in Ohio, some people would say of a perverse person, "He's just mean-spirited and that's all there is to it"—a simplistic opinion, though sometimes valid, that doesn't really get to the basis of the problem.

The habit may be caused by feelings of insecurity, or by a thinly disguised, unconscious desire to remain ignorant or inept. Egoism along with arrogance may be at the root of it. Or, one may simply be frustrated because of not knowing their major purpose in life. The results of mental perversity are that we close ourselves off from helpful information and often restrict our growth and maturity by refusing to heed good advice or to test a theory by applying it. The way to overcome it is to renounce the arrogance of egoism which is characterized by the attitude of "I am somebody special, independent of God—I don't need any help from any person or anything, and there is no one who can tell me anything I don't already know." The way for us to eliminate mental perversity is to stop denying our ignorance and to be willing to learn.

I have faithfully used all of the meditation techniques that I've learned and still have not been able to experience mental silence. What can I do to be successful in doing this?

Practice the meditation techniques with full attention, then rest and wait. Sit as long as it takes for emotions to settle and mental states to become refined. If you sit long enough, remaining alert and watchful without endeavoring to make anything happen, the subtle impulses that stir thought processes will become weak and cease to be influential. Success in meditation is assured by attentive participation and patient, alert sitting. Know that behind the screen of the mind you are ever peaceful, soul content, and knowledgeable.

When not meditating, cultivate emotional calm and inner serenity. Avoid anxiety. Do what you can to live an orderly life, without stress or strain. Learn, by practice, that by assuming a Self-reliant attitude you can experience awareness-of-awareness independent of thoughts and feelings. Then when you meditate, the same wholesome attitude and awareness of being content will enable you to proceed more successfully.

I've heard the question asked, "Do you like yourself?" It seems to me that this question implies an observer and an object to be observed, which is in conflict with our understanding of the Self. I am curious about the self-talk, the inner dialogue, a yogi might have while meditating with the heart overflowing with love, in God. How is this expressed in language without implying separation, two-ness, or duality?

So long as any sense of independent selfhood remains, we feel ourselves in relationship to something. When oneness is experienced, only that experience is real. We can attempt to describe it later, but inadequately. When we are established in Self-realization there are no questions to be asked. When not established in Self-realization—when identified even somewhat with emotions and mental processes—we may have thoughts about our real nature and even of our self-worth (in relationship to our sense of personhood).

Two questions: 1) Can prescription drugs interfere with our spiritual practices and influence our states of consciousness; 2) Does practicing harmlessness mean that we are to be passive while others abuse us?

Anything that changes our physical chemistry may also influence our mental and emotional states, as well as our states of consciousness. Note any differences that are apparent when the drug is being used, in contrast to when it is not. You will then know whether or not you are being adversely affected.

No, we need not be passive when others attempt to abuse us. When possible, we can improve communication and remove the cause of hostility, or we can remove ourselves from the situation. If the problem is one of harassment rather than physical abuse, we can take whatever legal and practical steps which might be necessary to stop it. We can also be invincible by renouncing any thoughts or feelings and mental attitudes which might be causing us to be in mental or psychic attunement with others who are hostile. They will then become friendly or they will ignore us. One of the yogic abilities is that of "invisibility." By minding our personal affairs, only others who are in harmony with us will be inclined to relate to us.

Is it true that, as spiritual growth is quickened, one's karmic conditions and personal issues are also more rapidly processed?

Many devotees report that this seems to be so for them. There can be several reasons for this. 1) It may be that when we are attentive to right living practices that we are also more aware of inner and outer conditions that need to be addressed and handled. 2) When we make intentional choices we interfere with flows of causation originated by past choices, desires, and actions. We may also experience conflict with others who have become familiar and comfortable with our former behaviors and routines. Also, our endeavors to make right choices may cause us mental confusion and emotional conflict. When we commit ourselves to living so that our highest good can unfold, all that is inconsistent with its unfoldment has to be eliminated or renounced. 3) Dietary and behavioral changes we make can contribute to psychological transformations, as well as weaken the influences of tamas and rajas guna as sattva guna influences become more pronounced. 4) With increasing superconscious influences, unconscious and subconscious programmings and tendencies (karmic or causative conditions) are weakened and cleansed from mind and body. 5) Awakened regenerative energies (shakti, flows of creative force empowered by kundalini—the heretofore latent soul force) can stimulate the mind and emotions, as well as facilitate biological changes. So if we are sincere about wanting to experience changes which can allow spiritual growth—and which can also be caused by spiritual growth—it is a good idea to be willing to let them occur.

Recently, while meditating, I suddenly "heard" a rushing, roaring sound in my head. I felt that something dramatic was about to happen and it disturbed me. I fear losing control of any kind. Please advise.

Your experience is not uncommon. Fear, or uncertainty about what the effects of an adjustment in states of consciousness might have, often prevents us from surrendering to changes which could occur if we could let unfoldments happen. During my early years of spiritual practice, especially when meditating, I, too, experienced similar situations. With practice, we can learn to remain as a wit-

ness to whatever occurs. It can be helpful to remember that our changeless essence as soul (individualized consciousness) is always the same. Shifts of viewpoints to levels of awareness which are more clear are always liberating. It can be helpful to relax into meditation, remaining alert and watchful while letting unfoldments be directed by our innate, guiding intelligence.

Samadhi (superconsciousness) is not really a state we enter into, but is our natural state. From it, we have "entered into" or identified with self-consciousness and have become comfortable with it—mistakenly presuming that self-consciousness is our natural condition. It is "normal" in that it is common for the human condition; it is abnormal from the viewpoint of soul awareness. It is often generally believed that we are limited beings aspiring to divine status. The truth is, when we are not Self-aware we are existing in a condition of "divine forgetfulness." Pure samadhi, unrestricted, ungrounded awareness and experience of our true condition, is not a mystical state to be attained—it is the free, knowing state to which we need to awaken.

Samadhi can be pure or impure; modified by mental (and guna) influences or not modified. Even when the mental field is clear, the influences of the gunas can prevail during samadhi. When tamas guna influences prevail, samadhi, even though devoid of thought influences, can be similar to deep, or to semiconscious sleep. One afterwards has little or no conscious awareness of the experience. When rajas guna influences prevail, one may perceive and experience a variety of colorful astral and refined causal phenomena. When sattva guna influences prevail, perceptions are more "celestial" and transcendental. During these occasions the soul is still aware of itself as the experiencer and observer. When awareness is removed from relationship with mental and guna influences, the Soul abides in awareness and experience of itself as pure consciousness. When the weak sense of independent existence fades, only absolute, pure consciousness remains.

These states, and the processes which occur as Self-realization unfolds, can be somewhat understood by intellectual inquiry. We also have innate knowing about them because no matter how involved we may become with sense experiences or influences of the gunas, our awareness of ourselves as individualized expressions of the One Consciousness is never completely obscured. Thus, when we con-

template the meaning of life, or when we hear the facts of life expounded, we often "almost comprehend" or we may have flashes of insightful perception which again quickly fade.

According to our philosophical view, duality (Spirit and Primordial Nature) produces time-space and the characteristics needed to manifest the physical realms. What makes possible the forming of other (causal, and astral) realms?

Causal (electromagnetic) and astral (life force) realms are also products of the interactions between Spirit and Primordial Nature. The outflowing force from the field of God is Om (Aum), which expresses as cosmic forces, cosmic particles, space, and time. These are aspects of the single force-flow from the field of God. In the creation (manifestation) process, fine spheres or realms precede grosser ones: from causal, to astral and physical). All require space in which to be manifested; time, for sequential events to occur; cosmic forces, to be expressive and formed; and the regulating cosmic influences to govern all actions.

Please discuss some of the physical effects which some people say they experience when meditating (or at other times): headaches, pounding at the base of the spine, pressure at the chakras, and hot and (or) cold feelings.

Some of these symptoms can have physical causes: high blood pressure, an overstressed nervous system, or unbalanced body chemistry. These conditions can be corrected by attending to wellness routines. However, similar symptoms may be a result of awakened soul forces which are causing physiological adjustments to occur. Headaches are usually due to tension. For this, learn to be more physically relaxed, mentally calm, and emotionally peaceful. As to any sensations in the spine, spiritual eye, or crown chakra, just observe them without being concerned about the matter. When psychological and physical resistance to the flows of awakened soul force is overcome, there will be no sense of discomfort—only interior satisfaction and pleasure sensations as the currents of force circulate. It is extremely helpful for one on a spiritual growth path to be attentive to environmental security and harmony, supportive relation-

ships, good nutrition and other wellness regimens, and to expand awareness so as not to be too self-centered. By attending to essential matters, all incidents relating to transformational changes will be minimized.

Are there recommended guidelines for the practice of Kriya meditation techniques during menopause?

During this transitional phase, which causes physical and emotional discomfort for some women, the practice of Kriya pranayama can be discontinued. Any of the other routines—prayer, mantra, mental chanting at the chakras, contemplation of light and sound—can be used.

Some say that Buddhist philosophy denies the existence of souls. How can this concept be reconciled with the generally prevailing idea that souls do exist?

Some Buddhist texts state that we are not independent, eternal beings, but fields of modified consciousness subject to change until awareness is removed from external circumstances (including mental processes). This concept (or insight) is no different from what is taught in the Kriya Yoga tradition. What may be the issue is the conflict between two viewpoints: 1) the soul is immortal and will continue to experience life as an individualized unit of awareness throughout eternity; 2) the soul, as individualized pure consciousness, will cease to exist as an individualized expression when it awakens from the delusion of independent selfhood. In other words, the soul does not exist by itself.

An example of extreme egoism (sense of independent selfhood) is the belief professed by some people that, after physical death, they will either dwell in heaven or hell throughout eternity or will be reconnected with their resurrected body at some point in future time.

What about experiences during and after final transition from the body—specifically, the various possible transitional states described in some philosophical systems versus going beyond them?

The ideal way to depart from the body is to awaken from involve-

ment with it and from mental and emotional states. One then awakens to clear astral or causal levels of perception or beyond them to transcendental states. If there is fear, or mental or emotional conflict and confusion, transitional states can be varied, just as dreams can be varied. Yogis teach that when one is ready to leave the body, one should be aware in the crown chakra, listen to Om, and surrender in God.

When with someone who is about to leave the body, be as calm as possible, in a meditative mood, allowing them the freedom to experience the process of detachment from body and mind in the most comfortable way. It will happen naturally and easily. Wish them well. There is no need to pray for their welfare—unless they need it—or to trouble your mind about their condition. Their experience will be in accord with their karma and/or degree of spiritual awareness.

I enjoy having pictures of the gurus and saints where I can frequently see them. I sometimes feel very close to them and even feel that they care about me and are helping me. Am I deluding myself, or is it really true that they can help and guide us?

By mental and spiritual attunement with states of consciousness represented by saints we have access to the influences of those states of consciousness. A picture, or envisioned ideal, can be for us a point of contact with states of consciousness we aspire to experience. Although there is no harm in feeling that a particular saint is supportive of us, it should also be acknowledged that, if the saint has been gone from this realm for some time, he or she may be involved with other matters of the moment and not actually have any conscious awareness of us. I, too, enjoy thinking about our gurus and various saints, while always looking to the Pure Field of God without form or name.

Addendum

Sharing the Light of Kriya Yoga

In the last issue of *Radiance* I requested readers to share with me their ideas about how we could more effectively inform new, interested persons of the availability and benefits of Kriya Yoga teachings and practices, and how to better serve initiates. Because this current issue is being prepared for the printer only a few weeks later, responses are still being received. I will share some of the ideas here, and more of them in the next issue.

Several outreach suggestions were offered, among them: write a popular book on Kriya Yoga; get on the Oprah Winfry television show (and/or others with a large viewing audience); implement a sustained, image-building, advertising program in various media to establish a perception of Kriya Yoga as being a "quality" teaching or way of life—for the purpose of encouraging people to have confidence in it and to attract more success-minded people; have introductory literature available for wider distribution; and offer more public programs in various communities and retreats in different regions of the country and the world. Regarding how to better serve initiates, some suggestions were: have initiate teachers travel to various communities to offer two or three day retreats; and have initiates who live near each other meet from time to time for extended meditation sessions. I appreciate the sharing of these ideas. They are all constructive. Please continue to communicate with me about these matters whenever you feel inclined.

An immediate and effective outreach action is for each Kriya initiate to freely distribute literature—to interested people they know or meet, and through available outlets in their community such as: metaphysical book stores, yoga groups, health food stores, or wherever else possible. The way to do it is to give it away without any expectation of results; that is, leave the response up to the individual. Paramahansaji referred to this kind of sharing as "planting seeds."

An available book for this purpose is our recently published new edition of *An Easy Guide to Meditation*. Turn to the last page of this book for quantity prices that, since we ship them postage free, are almost at cost. We had 30,000 copies of this edition printed in mid-February and more than 4,000 copies were sent out within the first 30 days. Another useful 48-page book is the just published *Satisfying the Heart's Sincere Desire to Know God as God Is.*

I am currently planning a booklet, with the same format as the two just mentioned. The tentative title is *An Introduction to the Philosophy and Practices of Kriya Yoga*—with the essential teachings, lifestyle guidelines, and practices of this direct way to rapid spiritual growth and fulfillment of all of life's primary aims and purposes. My thought is to have this published by early summer. We receive many inquiries about Kriya Yoga: What is it?, How do I learn it?, How can I be initiated?, and more. This new booklet will provide all of the necessary information. It will also be ideal for your sharing with interested people.

Making information available is vital, but something more is needed if benefits are to be experienced. There must be sincere response by the person newly introduced to the Kriya Yoga path, and supportive instruction and encouragement provided so learning can continue and transformative improvements can result. Without response, learning and practice cannot proceed. Without improvement in personal circumstances and in spiritual growth, the new devotee will tend to become discouraged—and either seek another way or become disinterested in self-improvement and revert to conditioned, habitual behaviors. The major purpose for the publishing of *Radiance* magazine is to provide regular support for Kriya initiates.

One reader recently asked, "How much information about Kriya Yoga can we share with others?" You can share literature. You can refer them to our basic books. You can explain basic philosophical concepts. You can teach them how to meditate (the basic procedure) so they can prepare for initiation if they want to take this step. If possible, you can facilitate a weekly, biweekly, or monthly meditation group experience.

When gathering for meditation, settle down and meditate for forty-five minutes to an hour. Avoid prolonged discussion before and after the session. Let everyone depart while their meditative calm

still prevails. Gatherings of initiates can meditate for one, two, or three hours per session if this is agreeable to the participants. Master used to tell his ministers, "Meditate long and deep with the people; let them "taste" God. That will change them."

Opportunities to Serve: Your Talents, Skills, and Abilities Can be Helpful to Our Cause

If you can translate some of our small books into German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, or any other major language, let me know. We have an excellent language translation service available for a fee, and have used it—and will continue to do so as funds allow. If good translations can be done as a service, this would make it possible to have more literature available in various languages.

We could also benefit by having someone with computer skills work with existing photographs (supplied by me) to modify and produce clearly defined computer generated copies of our guru line. When we are satisfied with finished results, we can send a computer disc to a lab and have a negative created. We would then have these reproduced and made available to interested devotees. The existing copies of photographs of Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar are not of excellent quality but can be computer enhanced. Available photographs of Paramahansaji are scarce because Self-Realization holds the copyrights on them and we will not interfere with their right to ownership. If you can do this, or know someone who can, please let me know.

Back Cover: The only available photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya, with his signature written in his native Bengali language. I have seen one other photograph of him, taken when he was much younger, which is of poor reproduction quality.

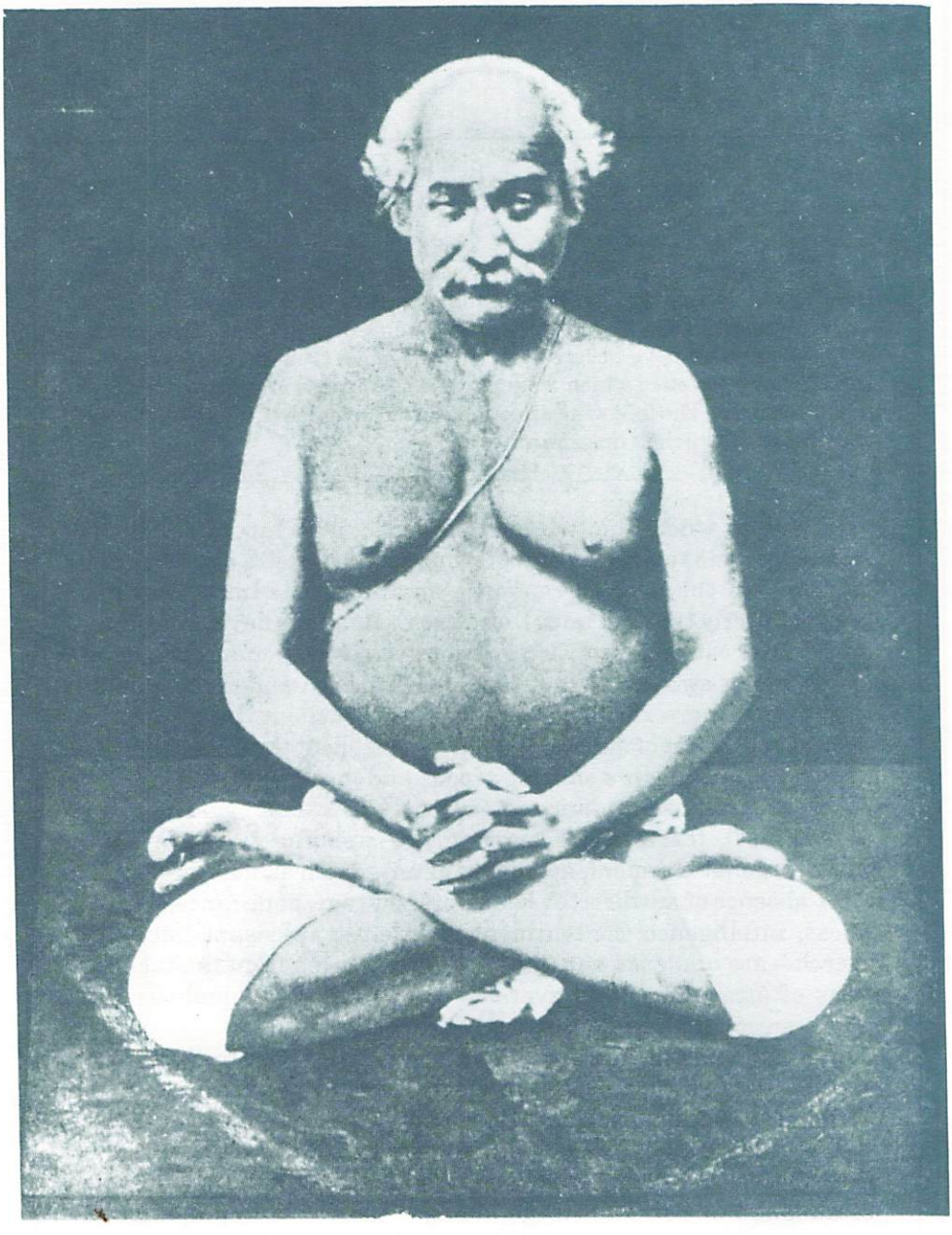
The Way of the Wise

The path of Kriya Yoga is for devotees of God willing to live intentional lives. In this way, one successfully lives in the world while always inwardly established in Self-knowledge and God-awareness. This way is easy when we remove ourselves (our awareness) from mental and emotional characteristics which fragment consciousness and cause conflicts and discontent. The following selection is from an old text, *Vasistha's Yoga*, the author of which is unknown.

They for whom the twin inclinations of attachment and aversion have come to an end do not (compulsively) desire anything nor do they feel the need to renounce anything. The mind does not become utterly tranquil until these two inclinations have been eliminated. How can equanimity, purity or dispassion pervade the mind of one who is swayed by thoughts of rightness, wrongness, gain or loss? Since there is only Supreme Consciousness (by Itself and manifested), what of importance can be said about the diverse world-appearances and one's shifting moods and mental states?

Desirelessness (absence of expectations which cause anxiety and unrest), fearlessness, unchanging steadiness, equanimity, wisdom, nonattachment, avoidance of misguided actions, goodness, total absence of misdirected behaviors, courage, endurance, friendliness, intelligence, contentment, gentleness, pleasant habits of speech—are qualities natural to one who is free from the inclinations of attachment and aversion. And even these qualities are nonintentional and spontaneously expressive.

One should restrain attention from flowing uncontrollably outward; then turn within and engage in introspective contemplation while involved in various necessary or chosen activities. With the sword of wisdom, cut through mental conditioning which alone is the cause of misperception of what is seen and experienced. Firmly established in Self-knowledge, doing whatever is appropriate in each situation and not even thinking about what has occurred to you without your seeking it, live a soul-directed life here and now.



শ্রীশ্রী কৃষ্ণা মাতাজীকৃপা প্রেমকান্তপুরী।

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

July – September 1995 Number 5

Light on the Path

GOD AS THE REALITY OF EVERY SOUL

Avatars and enlightened saints are pure agents of God's knowledge and power, and their presence blesses the world. It is indeed wonderful to be able to see spontaneous expressions of divinity through others. Of more value is to awaken to (and express) our own potential. We are here to realize the absolute truth of God and of cosmic processes, and to radiate the light of Spirit. What is possible for one soul, is possible for all souls.

Discipleship

LET US BE TRUE TO THE PATH OF LIGHT

The only burning or ardent desire a true devotee is permitted to nurture is desire for God-realization. Desires for provision of personal needs and wholesome, constructive purposes should be qualified by our primary aspiration to nurture spiritual growth and allow unfoldment of soul qualities.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates, to provide answers to relevant questions and forthright explanations in response to meaningful inquiries. Participation is encouraged.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
—*The Gospel According to Saint John 8:32*

Publisher's Note

Radiance is published quarterly as a forum (a gathering of interested persons for the purpose of communication) for initiate disciples of the Kriya Yoga tradition as renewed in our current era by Mahavatar Babaji. Most readers will have been initiated by me. Individuals who were initiated by any ordained representative of the guru line of Babaji to Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors are welcome to receive this publication.

Because the information is for initiates of this tradition, please keep it confidential. You may, of course, share it with others whom you know to be Kriya initiates. Inquiries about this path can be referred to our office.

If you are a Kriya initiate and a brother or sister disciple shared this issue of *Radiance* with you, you are cordially invited to subscribe. See the information below.

It is recommended that readers also receive our *Truth Journal* magazine and other literature, for supplemental study purposes and to have access to news of our ongoing programs.

Please use the enclosed response form to assist in keeping our lines of communication open and information flowing.

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GOD AS THE REALITY OF EVERY SOUL

Ask yourself: Who (or what) am I? The correct answer, taught by seers and known by every soul, is that, at the core, you are an individualized unit of pure consciousness. This is the absolute truth to be contemplated, realized, and actualized or demonstrated. This accomplished, nothing more is needed.

A common self-generated and self-maintained obstacle to clear realization of the fact of our essential divinity is our own resistance to directly confronting it. Instead, because of choosing not to renounce delusions (intellectual errors) and illusions (flawed perceptions), we may prefer to play the role of being a seeker instead of a knower and realizer of truth. We may enjoy looking at *what might be possible for us in the future* or *what others who are enlightened are doing*, rather than make necessary adjustments in viewpoints that allow Self-knowledge to unfold. It is obvious that, upon being informed of the facts of life, because of acquiring knowledge from an informed person or source or because of spontaneous insight, if we do not unfold spiritually our failure to do so is only because of our choice to dramatize ignorance and ineptitude. I say this because regardless of our outer circumstances (including mental and emotional conditions which are also external to the soul), we always have inner freedom to choose to adjust our mental states and states of consciousness and conform behaviors to modes we know to be most ideal. We can choose to do our best at whatever level we begin our Self-realization endeavors. We can agree to live the Kriya Yoga way, the way of intentional, constructive actions.

Paramahansa Yogananda often described the spiritual path as that of plain living and inspired, rational thinking. It is the natural way to live—easy to understand and to demonstrate when we agree to it. Right living is an ever-available, transformative *sadhana* (spiritual practice), the essence of Kriya Yoga. Wherever we are, doing whatever we have chosen or is necessary, is our available opportu-

nity to flawlessly apprehend the processes of life and to be fulfilled. In this way we can learn by participation, as well as work through and eliminate psychological conflicts. While doing this, remaining centered in soul awareness, with the understanding that we are spiritual beings relating to the human experience, we can regulate sensory and mental impulses while nurturing our divine qualities. Living effectively results in rational thinking, appropriate, life-enhancing behaviors, effective actions which produce successful outcomes, peace of mind, emotional contentment, and the weakening and elimination of destructive karma (life-restricting conditionings, desires, urges, drivės, and tendencies).

A devotee may desire an opportunity to have ideal circumstances for the purpose of engaging in spiritual practices—perhaps in a retreat environment removed from secular disturbances. While it can be useful to live in a cloistered environment for a duration for the purpose of uninterrupted contemplation (and doing this from time to time is recommended), living correctly where we are is the most obvious opportunity for learning and spiritual growth. Doing this is a most useful spiritual exercise, and is proof of our understanding. A master in the Zen tradition wrote, "My supernatural powers (*siddhis*) and miraculous acts are taking water from the well and carrying firewood." In essence, whatever needs to be done can be dutifully done with alert attention.

Contented, skillful performance of ordinary duties can be the means of our liberation. When we are content, mental disturbance and emotional conflict are absent, allowing a free flow of constructive thoughts and creative energies. When we are skillful, we are in harmonious accord with the rhythms and flows of nature and of circumstances. When challenged, which sometimes happens, we have an opportunity to improve our understanding and our behavior. Living like this solves many problems common to the human condition: willfulness grounded in egoism; self-centeredness; laziness; purposelessness because of disinterest or confusion; and addictive tendencies.

Because we function through a mind and body and are in relationship to nature and social circumstances, we are compelled to engage in actions. We are compelled to attend to matters which relate to our well-being, to behaviors essential to the nurturing of human relationships, and to actions which contribute to the acqui-

sition or unfoldment of knowledge. Even our subtle adjustments of moods, mental attitudes, and states of consciousness are necessary actions. The best way to proceed is to cheerfully agree to act wisely and well. This is the way of Karma Yoga: the way of agreeable, selfless work which results in constructive outcomes without causing problems, and which does not interfere with orderly unfoldments of spiritual consciousness. This approach to living purifies the mind, eliminates impressions of karma (*samskaras*), opens awareness to cosmic vistas, and enables us to live freely and enjoyably for the duration of our sojourn in space and time whether in this realm or another. So long as we are involved with nature at causal, astral, or physical levels, we will relate to space, time, and circumstances characteristic of such levels. It is therefore worthwhile to learn to live God-consciously and effectively where we are.

Avatars, Saints, Spiritual Masters, Gurus & and Our Soul Destiny

The world-presence of enlightened souls is a great blessing and we are fortunate when we can know and relate to them. As their enlightenment (clear knowledge) serves them, so only our enlightenment can serve us. God-realized beings cannot liberate us: they can share knowledge and blessing-influence but we have to awaken to higher understanding and soul freedom for ourselves. Many devotees of God deny themselves spiritual growth because of their emotionally influenced preference to worship avatars, saints, spiritual masters, and gurus instead of emulating them. It is true that attunement with bright beings is helpful. More helpful, is to commit to practices which facilitate the removal of physical and mental restrictions to soul unfoldment while working to clear our awareness of all delusions and illusions.

Avatars are individuals in whom the fullness of God's reality is expressive. The Sanskrit word *avatara* means "to descend into" and is used rather freely. It is used with special emphasis when referring to one who is believed to have been born into the world fully liberated, and is commonly used when referring to a person who has awakened to an advanced level of soul unfoldment because of intentional spiritual practices. It is common, for instance, for some devotees to refer to their guru as an avatar because of their high esteem

for the guru, and for people in need of a savior hero-spirit to deify (to make like God) a person who seems to them to embody the characteristics of the enlightened condition. There is, of course, no way for a person at the self-conscious level (or even at preliminary superconscious levels) to know who is fully illumined. We can only comprehend the states of consciousness of others which are similar to our own. We can only know what we are capable of knowing. Belief, regardless of how sincere, is not proof.

What can be more meaningful to us than attempts to classify the spiritual states of others is to apprehend that the fullness of God is innate to every soul and ever inclined to unfold and express. Rather than be overly concerned about specialized avatar manifestations, we can be inspired by the fact that God as the *universal avatar* is the being of every soul and is destined to emerge and be radiantly expressive. This means that our illumination and liberation of consciousness is assured. It is helpful to remember that spiritual mastership is not an attainment: *it is the spontaneous result of the soul's success in withdrawing from identification with the false sense of independent existence.* It is therefore sometimes referred to as an accomplishment. Nothing has been acquired, but something worthwhile has occurred.

A person who demonstrates *spiritual mastery* is capable of regulating sense urges and mental activities, and of experiencing superconscious states at will. A *saint* is one through whom divine qualities are expressive. A *guru* is a teacher. A guru may also be a spiritual master or saint. Not all spiritual masters or saints (except those who are fully enlightened) are liberated. They may have extraordinary abilities and keen insight, while still in need of continuing their spiritual practices for the purpose of eliminating restrictive psychological conditions and perfecting superconscious and God conscious states. Paramahansaji said that he had met but very few liberated souls during his earth life. What is important is our choice to do what we can to restore our awareness to wholeness.

For many spiritual aspirants, a common temptation is to mistakenly assume themselves to be fully enlightened when they are not. Another temptation is to embark upon a mission to teach and awaken others before being established in Self-realization. In the first instance, the aspirant's spiritual training is not completed. In the second instance, the same situation prevails along with the

unfortunate fact that endeavors to help others experience authentic spiritual growth cannot be completely successful.

In India, when a saint or spiritual master fulfills a special mission he or she is sometimes referred to as an avatar (embodiment of qualities and influences) of the aspect of God which relates to their mission. Thus, he or she may be referred to as an avatar of Vishnu if preservation of traditional or societal values (and/or the well-being of the planet) is the emphasis, or as an avatar of Shiva if the work involves the transformation of traditions and societal values to allow for the emergence of new, necessary, or more meaningful ones. Examples: Krishna is considered by devotees to be an avatar of Vishnu; Mahavatar Babaji is an avatar of Shiva. Shiva is the patron deity of yogis because yoga practice results in transformation and regeneration.

In Vedic scriptures the all-pervading Life or Spirit of God is said to indwell (but is not confined to) all levels of world manifestation and every thing and creature. At the level of causal manifestation (the field or realm of magnetic forces from which the astral realms are produced) the Spirit of God is named Ishwara (*Isvara*), the active expression of which is named Vishnu: that which preserves the fine field of nature. At the level of astral manifestation the active expression of the Spirit of God is named Brahma: that which is expansive. At the gross level of manifestation the active expression of the Spirit of God is named Shiva: that which dissolves (destroys) to make renewal possible. Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva are not beings independent of God; they are various active expressions of God. As such, they are sometimes referred to as lords or rulers of the realms they influence and regulate.

It is God, as Ishwara, that Patanjali refers to in the *Yoga Sutras*, to which the yogi is to surrender all actions and their results, as well as self-consciousness, in favor of apprehending the reality of God. Though indwelling the worlds and beings, the Spirit of God is not influenced by them: it is not modified or changed in any way. Individualized beings (souls), by contrast, are influenced by their identification with matter because of their delusions and illusions. The pure character of the soul is not itself modified; awareness is suppressed because of identification with the mind which is modified by impressions, memories, or samskaras. (Sri Yukteswar's name means "united with Ishwara").

According to yogic philosophy, God cannot be persuaded to intervene in human affairs but one can experience divine influences—evidence of grace and inspiration or infilling of Spirit—by cultivating awareness of God. The impulses of the Spirit of God expressive in the realm of nature which contribute to evolutionary actions, can assist us to spiritual unfoldment and effective function to the degree that we are cooperative and responsive. We can be cooperative by maintaining physical and psychological wellness, choosing a natural food plan, living selflessly with intentional purpose, attending to spiritual practices for the purpose of improving understanding and facilitating soul unfoldment, and learning to trust the supportive actions of nature.

Even if a person is not aware of the redemptive actions of God's grace or the beneficial influences of evolutionary forces, sooner or later the relationship between the Oversoul (God) and the individualized soul will result in evidential actions of grace which are redemptive. The currents of evolution will also be influential in contributing to gradual spiritual awakening and unfoldment. The desire for God-relationship, reinforced by intentional spiritual practice, quickens soul awakening and unfoldment processes. Even blind believers in God who have conviction without knowledge can experience spiritual awakening and growth by cultivating faith in God and aspiring to knowledge of God. For them (and for all truth seekers), transformative processes will occur more harmoniously if some endeavor to acquire knowledge is undertaken and if behaviors are adopted which enable them to have supportive relationships with others and with nature. This is why, in the yoga tradition, emphasis is placed upon the *yamas* (restraints for the purpose of regulating physical and mental impulses and living an ethical and moral life) and *niyamas* (intentional procedures or practices which enhance awareness and facilitate spiritual growth).

I cannot emphasize too strongly the usefulness of aspiring to full illumination of consciousness rather than be satisfied with preliminary or modified superconscious states. All superconscious states except that which is devoid of the influences of mental actions or the *gunas* (the constituent qualities of nature) are modified states preliminary to realization of absolute or pure consciousness. Religious literature often provides references to "gods" and "goddesses" who dwell on earth and in subtle, fine, and celestial realms. They are

partially enlightened souls with various degrees of cosmic awareness and God-consciousness who are still identified with the forces of nature. They are not liberated. They have yet to become established in conscious realization of absolute, pure consciousness. They may have considerable freedom to function and have exceptional knowledge. They may be able to do many exceptional works. However, their samadhi (or absorption in experience of oneness) is relative and impermanent because it is in relationship to the natural realm which is subject to change.

When full enlightenment is permanent we experience (realize) the truth that only God is real. If any sense of ego remains, it is like a fine, thin veil known by us to be necessary for individualized expression but which does not cloud awareness or in any way obscure experience of the truth of God's singular reality. We do not become God, because God is us. We only awaken from the mortal dream of independent existence. Any sense of relationship with God that we have prior to full enlightenment is due to our own sense of difference or separateness. While we can know and experience the reality of God, we cannot truthfully assert "I am God" because to think or utter words to define truth requires a sense of independent reality. Nor can the totality of God be explained to another. We can, however, be assisted by a God-realized person to directly experience the reality of God. They can share their soul force which can awaken ours. They can "let us into" their field of awareness if we are receptive. They can sometimes "see through" our delusions and illusions on our behalf.

We can help ourselves to God-knowledge and experience by letting our sense of independent reality dissolve, by being physically relaxed and mentally open, and by contemplating how it would be to know and experience God. It can also be helpful to establish mental and spiritual rapport with the guru or with a saint, as a point of contact with transcendental realities. We can attend to Kriya Yoga practices, including regular meditation, to provide ourselves opportunities to experience adjustments of states of consciousness and to enliven the nervous system and awaken dormant soul forces.

Paramahansaji was ever alert to observe indications that a disciple was prepared to receive what he had to share from the depths of his realization of God. All enlightened souls rejoice to be able to assist devotees to their highest good—realization of God.

LET US BE TRUE TO THE PATH OF LIGHT

To be true to our chosen discipleship path we must be true to our soul nature. As spiritual beings, what do we most desire? We desire knowledge of ourselves, God, and of universal processes that alone can provide us freedom from all limitations. We desire salvation: liberation of consciousness.

If desire is the seed that can blossom into actuality, if desire attracts to itself that which is necessary to accomplish envisioned ends and causes supportive adjustments in circumstances, why cannot our desire to be God-realized be as effortlessly fulfilled as our mundane desires? It can be, if our desire is pure and constant.

The only burning or ardent desire a true devotee is permitted to nurture is desire for God-realization. Desires for provision of personal needs and the fulfillment of wholesome, constructive purposes are acceptable because we are supposed to be self-responsible for our well-being. They should be qualified by our primary desire to awaken spiritually. When aspiration to enlightenment is primary, all other aspirations are likely to be determined by rational use of intelligence and common sense. When aspiration to enlightenment is not the primary motivating factor in our lives, we may be inclined to endeavor to seek temporary gratification in a variety of ways or to indulge in behaviors which dull the senses and cloud awareness. Commitment to the spiritual growth path results in wise choices of modes of thinking, emotional states, lifestyle routines, personal relationships, work or service, and how we use our time, energy, and available resources.

It is easier to think clearly and function effectively and successfully when right living along with spiritual growth is the focus of our lives. It is easier to renounce small-mindedness and addictive tendencies when the path of light is more important to us than awareness-clouding behaviors. As evidence of our commitment to

the path, and to support our resolve, we are wise to maintain a regular schedule of philosophical study, meditation practice and wellness routines, and follow through with intentional, concentrated endeavors so that everything we do is entirely constructive. Such actions will always produce satisfying results. *Remember: everything we do is spiritual practice.*

To "be true to God," be true to your Self, your innermost being, which is God's consciousness individualized. Because souls are individualized, they relate to nature through mind and senses. Our mind is conditioned; our essential being is unconditioned. By self-training in being soul-centered, you can always be aware of the difference between you as consciousness and your mental states and personality. Learn to remain soul-centered at all times, especially when meditating. You will then make right choices, behave appropriately in everyday circumstances, and easily remove awareness from mental processes when you sit to meditate. Intellectual and intuitive abilities will be more pronounced and reliable as a result of your being soul-aware, thus more conscious of your Larger True Self.

Live Freely in this Supportive Universe

An all too common obstacle to functional freedom devotees have, is that of inability to have some personal desires fulfilled or to accomplish purposes which seem worthy of being actualized. I have always been able to create or attract necessary circumstances and to accomplish most conceptualized purposes, and have never experienced prolonged lack or limitation. I know many people who are able to function effectively enough to live comfortably, whose desires are almost always fulfilled and needs are almost always met, yet an awareness of restriction and limitation hovers in their consciousness like a living presence, preventing them from being as freely functional as they would like to be.

One cause of awareness of limitation is that the soul is not yet enlightened enough be free from influences of ego-sense: the primary delusion or intellectual error. Another cause is the soul's tenacious attachment to conflicted mental conditionings and emotional states. We can awaken from ego-sense by intellectual analysis, intention, and superconscious meditation practice. The intellectual

approach is that of directly confronting the fact that because we are spiritual beings we cannot be content with delusion. The intentional approach is that of deciding to be soul-aware rather than to continue dramatizing ignorance and ineptitude. The way of superconscious meditation is that of withdrawing attention from all that we are not, so that what we are—pure consciousness—is clearly experienced.

On a day-to-day basis we can train ourselves to see through erroneous beliefs and unacceptable circumstances. If our circumstances are good but could be better, they can be excellent when we do our part. If circumstances are poor, they can be good and even excellent when we do our part.

During my first visit to Japan, in 1964, I visited several major cities to speak under the auspices of the several million member Seicho-No-Ie (Home of Infinite Life) organization founded by the late Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi. In Tokyo, I was one of the guests at a dinner hosted by the businessmen's group of Seicho-No-Ie. They gathered each month to share news of their ventures and to inspire and motivate each other. One of the members told his story:

Several years before, he was materially impoverished when an earthquake destroyed his house and his place of employment. He thought to himself: The universe itself was produced out of the void. I, too, can have circumstances produced out of the void: out of the "nothing" which contains everything! An idea surfaced in his mind and he acted upon it without hesitation. He set up a sidewalk vending business, obtaining small quantities of household products and vegetables on credit and paying for them as quickly as the items were sold. Before long his new business was so successful that customers were obstructing pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk and he was asked by city officials to move to another location or close down his business.

The owner of the small hotel in front of which the man's business had been operating, approached him with an offer. "I want to sell," he said. "Why don't you buy this building from the profits you will surely generate from sales of your products?" With a building, he expanded his line of products and continued to flourish, soon constructing a larger building and starting a meal delivery service for workers in nearby office buildings. Years later, his company was operating supermarkets and department stores throughout Asia. His

initial unfoldment of "good fortune" was to be impoverished by an act of nature. He said, "If I had not been challenged to act, I might still be working at a low paying job."

Two striking characteristics common to successful people (as well as to individuals who live healthy and long) are adaptability and self-determinism. People who are adaptable can adjust quickly to changing circumstances and can manage stress effectively. They are not easily discouraged or traumatized by challenge or misfortune. Self-determinism enables us to be in command of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as to see through obstacles to alternative possibilities. When we understand that our world is flowing and that conditions are changeable we can more effectively relate to it. We can learn to "see" harmony, right action, and fulfillment as existing realities to be actualized in the phenomenal realm.

What is it you want to experience, or do? See it accomplished with inner vision. That is the first step. At this stage, don't think of reasons why your desires cannot be fulfilled or your purposes not demonstrated or actualized. Here, you are working at the level of primary cause which enables you to see existing possibilities or imagine new ones.

If you need something and do not know how to acquire it, or funds are lacking, see yourself having it. Feel it to be so. Have the feeling of satisfaction you would have were it a fact. It is a fact in your imagination and in your awareness of having. You will think of ways to acquire the desired thing or circumstance, attract resources to fund it, or the universe will freely provide you with it.

If you want to travel somewhere and lack funds, or your present schedule seems an obstacle, see and feel yourself where you want to go. Be there in your imagination and in your awareness. Feel that the project is accomplished. Funds will flow to you, circumstances will be arranged, everything will unfold without difficulty. I often explain this process to devotees who want to come here for one of our meditation retreats and feel themselves unable to do it because of one difficulty or another. Many of them adhere to the procedure and, later, come here and testify that it works. Of course it works! The creative principles governing the laws of causation are dependable! When they seem not to work, it is either because we have not properly applied ourselves to the process or there is a conflict of purposes at a deeper level.

For spiritual growth, mentally see and soulfully feel yourself to be expansive, knowledgeable, competent, and functional. Never affirm that you cannot do anything! Never affirm weakness, instability, lack, or limitation. Affirm only successful function and prosperity in every aspect of your life. If results are not immediate, hold fast to your vision and your faith while doing your best to improve your knowledge and skills. Mentally and spiritually associate with the gurus, with spiritual masters and saints, while relying always upon God and the supportive actions of nature.

Consider this world as a school in which you have opportunities to learn valuable lessons which you can successfully complete by awakening to your full spiritual potential. You can, if you want to. You have the same innate qualities and abilities as every other soul. More, as an initiate of this tradition, you have knowledge of self-help procedures, the blessings of the gurus, and the supportive prayers and good will of your brother and sister disciples on this path of light.

I often heard Master say, "Be faithful to the end!" The end of endeavor and challenge is when we awaken in God. Don't think of the end as the conclusion of this earth sojourn. Transition from the body is only an incident, not an entry to "heaven" or the enlightened condition (unless we are prepared to experience it). Some devotees err in thinking, "If I can just get through this incarnation I will be with the saints when I pass on." The only way to guarantee our future good is to learn to see and demonstrate it here and now. Renounce all fantasies and delusions. Wake up. Live right. Be fulfilled in every useful way.

> Solve all your problems through meditation. Exchange useless speculations for actual God-communion. Clear your mind of dogmatic ideas; let in the healing waters of direct perception. Attune yourself to inner guidance and you will discover the answer to every question in life.
>
> – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are requested by readers of this publication. Please use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in our open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of others.

Note: Harald Reiske, our minister in Passau, Germany, brought to my attention that in the last issue (page 24, first full paragraph) it was written that warmth is felt with the ascending current during Kriya Pranayama, and cool descending. It should be the reverse of this: cool ascending and warm descending. This is for novice practitioners, to help them feel the spinal pathway. When the current flows, it will usually be experienced as a pleasurable surge ascending and a soothing flow descending.

Several inquires were made since the last issue:

Occasionally, when I meditate, when I least expect it, I see a clear white light like a full moon. How can I learn to see this at will?

Perception of the clear, white light usually occurs when attention is removed from physical and mental awareness. Some awareness of physical sensations and thought processes may persist while inner awareness is more pronounced. This light can be seen at will by patient practice, usually when one is very calm. It can be helpful to look gently into and through the spiritual eye, without straining, or merely be aware in that area as well as in the higher brain. Sitting for a longer duration of time can also be helpful—to allow for more complete relaxation and deeper internalization of attention.

Gentle, concentrated attention, with least effort is also helpful. Flow easily into contemplation, rather than endeavor to force results. Now and then resolve to sit calmly until the light appears, or until you feel completely soul-satisfied.

When I meditate, I often hear the "buzzing bee" sounds, which yoga texts refer to as the prana-frequency of the base chakra. How should I proceed from this stage onward?

Let your awareness be absorbed in the sound while gazing into the spiritual eye. Experiment by bringing your attention and feeling upward through the chakras: from the base chakra to the second chakra, then to the third, fourth, and fifth chakras, and to the spiritual eye and crown chakra. Do this gradually and notice as the sound changes. You may not hear all of the prana-frequencies as you ascend the chakra pathway. Just notice the different sounds. Then, at the spiritual eye and in the higher brain centers, listen to the flowing sound of Om and proceed with Om contemplation. Cultivate more spinal pathway awareness. The regular practice of Kriya Pranayama helps to increase chakra awareness, as does practice of *Jyoti (also referred to as Yoni) Mudra.* (Refer to back issues of *Radiance* to review these techniques.)

Explain more about samadhi states, especially the difference between samadhi as identification with an object of meditation versus samadhi that results in unfolded soul knowledge and conscious clarity that remains as a permanent experience.

Samadhi (oneness, wholeness) can be in relationship to an object of contemplation or it can be clear awareness of pure being. The former can be useful; the latter is liberating. When meditating, one may so identify with light, sound, or whatever is being contemplated, that the feeling of individuality is replaced by direct experience. This dissolving of individuality has value in that it allows the meditator to experience tranquil oneness (with whatever was contemplated), but awareness usually becomes again individualized following the samadhi episode. One then has the pleasant memory of the experience. Repeated episodes of this samadhi-with-support can have a purifying effect on body and mind over a period of time. Deep-seated

karmic impressions may require many years to be eliminated in spite of frequent samadhi-with-support experiences. With practice one may be able to experience such samadhi states at will, yet in ordinary consciousness after samadhi, still be subject to psychological conflicts, delusions, and illusions. Samadhi-with-support is like superconscious sleep: superior to subconscious sleep, to be sure, but still in relationship to nature or to mental states.

Samadhi-without-support is transcendental consciousness, devoid of clouded awareness. It can occur in a flash of insight and remain, or it can be temporarily experienced. When it is permanent it is *sahaja samadhi* (natural, spontaneous realization at all times, whether one is meditating or not.) This is the ideal state to which to awaken. It is the same as the Zen realization of Buddhist seers. Enlightened souls whose realization of oneness is permanent still usually meditate regularly, or from time to time, for the purpose of resting in the experience of absolute being. (*Zen* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese *Ch'an*, an abbreviation of *Chann-na*, from the Sanskrit word *Dhyana*, yogic contemplative meditation.)

The Zen tradition teaches the ideal of instantaneous enlightenment, although lifestyle regimens are usually recommended—with emphasis upon naturalness and simplicity—and various forms of contemplative meditation are encouraged. The end result of living the way of Zen is to live effectively. One is encouraged to get beyond bondage of rituals and concepts by awakening to direct perception and experience of the truth (the facts of life) which presently exist. Only fixated attachment to externals and clouded awareness obscure the soul's awareness of itself. When attachments are renounced and awareness is clear, soul awareness shines of its own accord. With illumined soul awareness, all knowledge is spontaneously revealed.

It is sometimes possible to be assisted in experiencing transcendent states of consciousness by someone who is already established in Self-realization. A gentle "forcing" of a shift of states of consciousness by the guru for the disciple may be done by a touch, a look, or by an act of soul-intention. When the disciple is at the stage of breaking through from relative states of consciousness to more refined levels, the personal intervention of the guru can be instrumental in causing a transformative adjustment of the disciple's state of consciousness. I often experienced Master's assistance in quiet ways: when in his presence, talking with him or observing him interacting

with others, and when mentally and spiritually attuned to him whether in his presence or not.

Spontaneous samadhi states can occur at any time. We can prepare ourselves to experience them by aspiring to clear states of consciousness and by complete Kriya Yoga practice: regulation of sensory and mental impulses, study and reflection, wholesome living, meditation and other spiritual practices, and surrender in God. Unmodified samadhi (realization of wholeness) is not a state of consciousness to produce or create: it is our natural state of pure soul awareness, most easily experienced when all attachments to externals are renounced and the illusion of independent existence no longer limits us. Just as self-consciousness precedes superconsciousness (degrees of soul awareness), so superconsciousness precedes preliminary samadhi states which are but stages of awakening leading to complete enlightenment.

To me, meditation is more like melting in God rather than my having a sense of attunement or relationship with the gurus or other saints. Am I on the right track?

Yes, regardless of preliminary procedures, perceptions or experiences, dissolving ego boundaries and melting in God is the perfect conclusion of meditation practice. Do this while remaining alert and surrendered, letting the process occur naturally. When our sense of independent selfhood decreases, realization of God alone increases. Even the sense of relationship with God falls away as vivid experience of God becomes pronounced. Relationship requires at least two things or beings so that interaction can occur. In God, duality does not exist.

Attunement with saints, and/or contemplation of God or aspects of God, can be helpful during preliminary stages of meditative contemplation. As meditation proceeds, awareness of all that is other than God alone will drop away. When melting in God, be open to discovery rather than to mistakenly think partial awareness of God to be the ultimate degree to be experienced.

How is kundalini related to levels of conscious awareness? I know two people who seem to have experienced kundalini awakening. Their experience has been so satisfying that neither of them

seems to be interested in spiritual growth. Both of them seem to feel that their experience is the ultimate event in their lives.

They have probably experienced partial awakening of *shakti*, the active vital force which is a preliminary manifestation of kundalini awakening. Shakti is active in all people; were it not so, they would not be alive. Its actions are more pronounced in healthy, energetic, mentally alert, and creative people, and even more pronounced when one is obviously spiritually awake—when soul awareness is experienced. When kundalini awakens, dynamic shakti activity results in psychological transformation and unfoldment of superconscious states. Your friends probably feel good (which is useful), without presently being interested in spiritual growth.

I (and some of my friends) like to open ourselves to the Spirit of God while singing, "I am she, I am she, blessed Spirit, I am she." We have been told that this is not proper. Why not? We enjoy doing this. As women, doing this seems appropriate.

In one of India's devotional chants (by Shankara) adapted to English by Paramahansa Yogananda, the opening verse is: "No birth, no death, no caste [social standing] have I; I am He, I am He; blessed Spirit, I am He; I am free, I am free; blessed Spirit, I am free."

Spirit (God's enlivening aspect and influence) is genderless: neither male nor female. When Shankara composed the chant he was probably thinking of Spirit as "male" in relationship to "female" nature. Vedic scriptures refer to the interplay of Spirit and nature which makes possible cosmic activity and the soul's involvement with nature. Spirit "impregnates" nature with life to animate it. Of course, nature (Om, space, time, cosmic particles) or *maya* (form producing) is also an aspect of God in manifestation. Usually, devotees contemplate Spirit as the life-imparting aspect of God and nature as God's outer, manifesting aspect. Some devotees think of nature, including cosmic forces, as Divine Mother; thus, the worship of the so-called feminine aspect of God. When awareness transcends the dualities, the idea of gender is also transcended.

One could avoid the male-female (superimposed) identity problem by chanting (and contemplating) "I am It, I am It" but that might not feel comfortable. At the level of devotional attunement, it really

doesn't matter what words are used (and God certainly doesn't care). When mental concepts and emotions are quieted, all that remains is the devotee's experience of absolute oneness. It is a good idea, however, to let devotional practices be chosen by understanding and reason to the best of our ability.

To me, the "world" seems unattractive and almost devoid of real life, and the behaviors of most people seem meaningless. I can retreat to my inner peace but I also have to work in the mainstream of society. Worldly circumstances are not of interest to me; only the divinity behind them is appealing. Any suggestions?

Many devotees of God share your outlook and feelings. Nature itself is marvelous to behold and its actions satisfying to understand. It can be helpful to acquire insight into the universe as a play of cosmic forces and its processes as orderly and exact. We can then understand that in this present sphere, all possibilities for fulfillment and creative expression exist. The attitudes, values, and (often) behaviors of many people leave much to be desired because in our present time-cycle the majority of human beings are not yet spiritually awake—a situation which is progressively improving. The important matter for a devotee of God is to give attention to fulfilling the four aims of incarnated life: 1) Live in harmony with nature's processes while actualizing your personal destiny; 2) Have necessary desires easily fulfilled; 3) Have real needs spontaneously satisfied; 4) Awaken to complete Self-knowledge and soul freedom. While doing this, live a constructive life of service and enjoy your participation.

The work you do to maintain yourself can be accepted as necessary action as well as service to society. All that we do, we should do because it is right or appropriate, without any need for recognition or acclaim. The main thing is to always be anchored in the Infinite regardless of where we are or what we are doing. The way to relate to the world is to do everything without attachment and without being adversely influenced by circumstances. Chapter four, verses 14 and 15 of the *Bhagavad Gita* provide helpful advice. Krishna, speaking to Arjuna, counsels: "Actions do not taint Spirit (Pure Consciousness); I have no desire for the fruits (result) of actions; thus one who comprehends this is not bound by actions. Having known

this, the ancients, seeking (spiritual) release, also performed actions. Therefore, perform actions with this understanding." Without any compulsion to grasp at life, and without any desire to emulate the attitudes and behaviors of persons who are self-conscious and self-centered, simply live a natural, well-ordered, spiritually purposeful life.

I am confused about the meaning of the Apocalypse referred to in the Christian Bible. What do the masters say about this?

Apocalypse, from Latin and Greek, means "to uncover" or reveal. *Apocalyptic* relates to a presumed prophetic revelation, portending future disaster or a final decision or climax. It is usually based on a deterministic, pessimistic view of history. Apocalyptic literature makes extensive use of symbolism, emphasizes ecstatic experience as the realm of revelation, and usually identifies superhuman beings—angels and demons—as agents of cosmic conflict. It arose in Jewish circles about 150 B.C. and flourished in the following three or four centuries. Jewish apocalyptic ideas are the result of an extended process that derived information from both Jewish prophecy and Babylonian (present day Iraq) and Persian sources, though continuity of thought is obscure. During the time of Jewish captivity by the Babylonians (587 B.C.) the hope that God's intervention would consummate the process of history and inaugurate his reign or rulership of the world emerged. This expectation appears in the Old Testament Book of Daniel. Although Christianity made no original contribution to apocalyptic attitudes, Christian influences began with groups of people already indoctrinated in end-time beliefs or hopes. John the Baptist and some members of the early Christian community (including Paul) reflected apocalyptic attitudes. The Apocalypse of John (the book of Revelation in the New Testament) contains elements of thinking and symbolism that reflect the idea of a final catastrophic incident and a time of judgment for mankind. Some Christian sects (Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other fundamentalist groups) still cling to the idea of a soon ending of the present age of materialistic decadence that will be followed by an era of light and grace. (For this brief overview I referred to the *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*; from material contributed by R.C. Briggs, Emeritus Professor, New Testament Interpretation,

Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia.)

Apocalyptic thinking is typical of individuals and groups incapable of rational assessment of historical trends and who may be frustrated because overwhelmed by prevailing events and circumstances. They, therefore, tend to hope for an event that will cleanse human consciousness as preparation for a new and better world condition. Since their ideas and (false) expectations arise from their defeatist attitudes, their mental perception of future conditions on the planet are rather morbid. True, they hope for a better world, but they envision mass destruction, suffering, and punishment for those whom they feel to be the cause of their unhappiness. Enlightened masters teach that individuals should be self-responsible for their own well-being and spiritual growth here and now, rather than base their aspirations on illusions of future possibilities.

According to the theory of cosmic time-cycles as propounded by Sri Yukteswar in his book *The Holy Science* (and elaborated upon by me in my books *Life Surrendered in God* and *Surrendered Love, Redeeming Grace*, we are now 295 years removed from the last Dark Age and proceeding rapidly in an ascending cycle that is removing us from materialistic values because of accelerated mental and spiritual growth of the global human family. I can recommend three things to do: 1) Refer to the above sources to acquire insight into evolutionary trends; 2) Avoid useless discussions with people who are firmly convinced of (or intrigued with) apocalyptic ideas; 3) Give full attention to right living and dedicated spiritual practices to facilitate your awakening to the fullness of life.

Can we receive personal visitations (and help or instruction) from enlightened masters—in dreams, visions, or in other ways? If so, how can we determine the difference between a true communication and a self-created, illusory incident?

While inner plane communication is not ruled out, it is not as common as is often publicized and believed. The most practical way to communicate with an enlightened person is to meet on the physical level for the purpose of discussion along with mental and spiritual rapport. Dreams and visions of enlightened souls are subjective perceptions that occur within our own field of awareness and may be generated (or influenced) by our mental-emotional conditionings

and tendencies rather than be actual personal contacts. Even so, inspiration and guidance may be experienced because of unfoldment of innate soul knowledge and/or the feeling that something meaningful has occurred. It is helpful for us to determine whether or not a dream or vision of this nature is self-generated in order to avoid self-delusion. Sometimes, when we are in need of encouragement, we unconsciously call upon our soul resources which can be the causative factor in influencing the mind to create a dream of a saint when asleep (or vision when meditating) which provides assurance. We can also have vivid dreams of people, saintly or otherwise, with whom we have telepathic rapport. A person with the ability to concentrate upon another person's mind can induce that person to have a dream in which interaction between them occurs. Some saints beneficially assist disciples in this manner.

Our dreams of saints are constructive, as are meditative superconscious visions, because they indicate that we are open to elevating influences. During meditation, however, it is better to endeavor to transcend mental phenomena in favor of expanded states of consciousness and transcendental insights. If visions of saints occur during meditation, they can be enjoyed but should not become objects of mental or emotional attachment. Likewise, during the course of everyday living, it is better to be focused on living consciously and intentionally rather than maintaining attitudes and feelings of dependency upon anything other than our relationship with God. If we are aware of the blessing-influences of saints who are inclined to assist us, we should remember that it is God's supportive grace which makes the experience possible. We can be appreciative of the blessing while being thankful to the Source of all blessings. At all times, endeavor to clearly comprehend what is occurring while avoiding fantasy. Learn to be anchored in the Infinite so as not to be dependent upon real or imagined relative phenomena. Let your aspiration to be like the saints and spiritual masters (and even to awaken to levels of God-realization which surpass those of the most illumined saints of which you have knowledge) impel you to full enlightenment and liberation of consciousness. We are not, of course, endeavoring to compete with others, or to involve our minds with thoughts of who is more spiritually advanced. Our focus should be upon attending to matters essential to unfolding our own innate knowledge and to awakening to spiritual freedom as quickly

as possible. This is why we are in this world.

Paramahansa Yogananda always encouraged me to be established in God-awareness. His personal assistance was helpful during our occasions of personal interactions when he was embodied and is still helpful because of our present soul attunement. However, he has been physically absent—at least in the Yogananda incarnation—for forty-three years (since 1952) and I do not know where he is or what he is doing. Before he departed he said he would rest in space for a duration, then be with Babaji for a while in the Himalayas. He need not incarnate in a physical body to be with Babaji, since Babaji's consciousness is not confined to his fleshly form. Master may be reincarnated already, or he may not have done so. Whether he has or not is of little consequence, for he is not a mind or body any more than we are a mind or body.

I occasionally receive a letter from someone who informs me that they feel themselves to be in telepathic (or dream, or vision) contact with Paramahansaji (or other saints) and are being instructed to do certain things or to teach or help others, but do not know how to proceed. If the contact and instruction was undeniably clear, there would be no doubt about the fact and no confusion about how to proceed. Though they may be influenced by saints, it is more likely that their own soul urge creates the illusion of saintly contact for the purpose of directing them to seek advice and encouragement from someone who is knowledgeable and physically available for communication. Frequently, when I am asked to provide insight or guidance, if my response is too practical the person will inform me that they "feel led" to follow their own guidance on the matter. They prefer illusions to facts. I am in the flesh, have knowledge and experience of these matters, can discern truth from untruth, and can provide accurate and useful information—if anyone in need of clarification is willing to listen and learn.

To the emotionally immature, fantasy is more attractive than reality. For this reason we see so many people in our present era who are obsessed with angels, channeling, and other forms of presumed supernatural communication. Preoccupation with such involvements appeals to our childish nature which does not want to confront the adult necessity of exercising reason and being dedicated to purposeful, self-responsible behavior.

Where our interest and attention is, there will be our experi-

ence. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (9:18) Krishna informs Arjuna:

> "Those established in *sattva* (truth and right endeavor) go upward; the *rajasic* (the restless and emotional who are subject to illusions) stay in the middle; the *tamasic* (the ignorant or deluded) go downward."

To *go upward* is to awaken to clear states of consciousness. To *stay in the middle* is to remain as we are. To *go downward* is to become even more unconscious. By aspiring to God-knowledge we accelerate our soul unfoldment. By dabbling in nonessentials we remain fixated at our present level of awareness. By avoiding the issue of self-responsible living along with the necessity of experiencing psychological and spiritual growth, we tend to become lethargic and delusional. Even devotees whose spiritual growth is somewhat pronounced can fall back into old habits and experience a clouding of awareness. In the Christian community such individuals are sometimes referred to as "backsliders" because they reverted to their former, self-conscious attitudes and behaviors. A yoga practitioner who reverts to former habit-bound or misguided behaviors is referred to as a fallen yogi. Anyone who has gotten off course can return to the right way by choice. When reading the *Gita*, remember that it is a philosophical novel, not a recorded account of an actual conversation between the central characters. When reading this inspiring text, don't get carried away, thinking that "Krishna said this" or "Arjuna said or did that." Enjoy the drama, aware that the text was written to be attractive to devotees as well as to impart revealed knowledge (*veda*).

All true guidance, whether from within the depths of our own being, discerned by observation of available circumstances, offered by a friend or associate, read in a book or other published source, imparted by a teacher, or telepathically shared by someone known or unknown to us, comes from the Source through the agency or means of communication. The agency or the means of communication is not as important as the truth that is revealed to us. We must eventually awaken to the stage where clear knowledge of ourselves along with knowledge of God and life-processes is constant. We will then have no further need for external help. What is needed, by all devotees who are not yet enlightened, is wholehearted commitment

to the Kriya Yoga way of accelerated spiritual unfoldment and liberation of consciousness. This is the balanced approach to constructive living regimens and regular practice of meditation.

My challenge is that I fluctuate between aspiring to spiritual growth—during which time it is easy to think constructively and attend to all activities with enthusiasm—and occasions of despondency, self-doubt, and emotional dependency. What can I do to always be inspired and true to my God-realization resolve?

Be attentive to duties, regimens, and practices you know to be best regardless of your mental, emotional, or physical states. Learn to function from soul awareness, from your core level of being. Just do what you know is best for you to do, when it needs to be done. Inspirational reading can be motivational. Meditation practice sustained until a "peak experience" is stabilized will provide healing to mind and body, clear awareness, allow spontaneous insights to unfold, and be daily confirmation of your commitment to spiritual growth. The most helpful approach is to do everything motivated by your resolve to live as you know to be ideal. Then, even if spiritual progress is not as satisfying as you would like it to be, you will at least be living in harmony with nature and be at peace within yourself.

It can also be helpful to have a sense of larger purpose: to know that you are making a constructive difference in the world merely by living correctly and that your behavior is an example for others to emulate if they wish to do so. Further, do something useful to make it possible for others who are interested in self-improvement to acquire information. There is no need to get personally involved in prolonged philosophical discussions or be concerned with whether or not what you do is worthwhile. Be an agent for the flow of knowledge and let the results be what they will. The easiest way to provide useful information is to distribute our literature. Another effective way is to financially contribute to the CSA ministry which is dedicated to spreading the light. When you do these things, you can know that you are involved in worthwhile processes which are larger than your personal interests. You will become more cosmic conscious as a result. (If you are primarily associated with another organized Kriya Yoga movement, such as Self-Realization Fellow-

ship or the Ananda Community, then put your personal and financial energies there.) Be more open to the idea of giving, of letting goodness express through you, rather than in getting anything. You will discover that you already have everything because you live in the reality of God which is wholeness.

The major obstacle to spiritual growth is self-consciousness which causes one to feel alone and dependent. Outgrowing egocentric attitudes is a major step in the direction of emotional maturity and unfoldment of soul potential.

It may also be helpful to mark your calendar when you feel at your best and when you experience a tendency to become despondent, to see if the pattern repeats in cycles. If so, it may be related to hormonal or biorhythm changes, both of which can be effectively addressed. Maintain regular habits of sleep, work, rest, and eating. Avoid excessive behavior of all kinds, including unnecessary or overly emotional social interaction. Endeavor to have your life flowing smoothly, with bills paid on time and useful projects in progress.

Settle down with a long-term vision in relationship to living your life. Understand that you are living in the field of endless time, and until you withdraw from the material realms you will be involved with them. Learn to be content in the world while endeavoring to improve your understanding and your skills. In this way, avoid both boredom in the present and anxiety about the future.

Cultivate optimism and courage. Be a divine visionary, intentional and fearless, with actions grounded in reason. Use your intelligence to cut through mental confusion and your power of soul will make right choices and accomplish worthwhile purposes. Absolutely refuse to be a victim of restlessness, moods, and circumstances which challenge. Even when you don't feel inwardly strong, affirm your soul nature and live from that level.

Addendum

Attracting the Highest Good

I appreciate the letters received since the third issue of *Radiance* was distributed—in which I requested feedback with ideas and suggestions for our being more effective in contacting and serving individuals sincerely interested in spiritual growth. We already have in place the routines for communicating with people with a casual interest: our advertising, literature outreach, and ongoing public programs and private retreats. Reaching out to "everyone" is just a matter of utilizing existing communication tools and media.

What I am more interested in doing is touching and serving individuals who are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually ready for indepth learning and Kriya Yoga initiation. Some of these souls are attracted to us because of our general outreach activities. They are the few among the many and we are glad to become acquainted with them. They are the ones who, when they establish contact, say, "This is what I have been looking for!" They tend to learn fast, diligently engage in right living and spiritual practice regimens, and remain affiliated for decades. Their faithful participation enables them to experience satisfying spiritual growth. I am interested in attracting more devotees like this. They are looking and are prepared; they only need an invitation. They are destined to be with us.

We can open the door to devotees of God by being open to the idea of having them come into contact with us. This requires inner work on our part: an adjustment in attitude that removes disbelief, doubt, and any reluctance to supportively share the light with others, or to be reclusive. We can also work gently on the outer level, by having our work be more visible. Useful to this outcome is literature distribution.

A few months ago I mentioned my plan to prepare a booklet that would serve as introduction to this teaching emphasis. This was published in early May under the title *The Philosophy and Practices of Kriya Yoga*. We had thirty thousand copies printed and you should

have received one by now because we mailed a copy to everyone on the regular CSA mailing lists. (If, by chance, you are only on the *Radiance* mailing list, request a free copy.)

Also, request as many copies of our booklets as you can share with others. Give them to people you know to be sincerely interested in more effective living and spiritual growth, and give a sample copy to the manager or book buyer at your local metaphysical bookstores. Remember to do it freely with no expectation of response. Those who are ready, will respond by contacting our office when they feel inclined to do so. Sow the seeds and let God determine the harvest. (This is the way of Karma Yoga, the way of selfless service. Perform all of your actions like this.)

Paramahansaji often said, "This work (of spreading the message and transmitting the spiritual power available through Kriya Yoga practice) is of God. In the future, millions will be blessed by it. You will see." He did not originate this teaching. He was chosen by Mahavatar Babaji to be one of its messengers. Throughout his earth life he was alert to discovering individuals who would and could assist him in his mission—as I am, also. Along with attending to our personal duties and spiritual practices, we can do nothing of greater value for the welfare of others than to attract to ourselves our highest good and show others how to attract to themselves their highest good. The highest good for everyone is Self-knowledge which blossoms into God-realization. As we awaken to increasingly clear states of consciousness, mental clarity, and spiritual fulfillment naturally reflect as harmonious, satisfying personal circumstances.

For our work to grow, the great essential is for every Kriya initiate to be personally dedicated to the path. We are dedicated to enlightenment of the individual first, then to reaching out to others. If we are not living the principles, our endeavors to assist others to spiritual growth will be futile. Just as we cannot helpfully inform others of the facts of life if we are not possessed of understanding, so we cannot share the vitality of God if we are not enlivened by it. Well-intentioned actions to spread the message of Kriya Yoga by persons who are not grounded in its principles and practices will only result in increasing the numbers of participants who are more interested in social interaction than they are in Self-realization, or in gatherings of "devotees" whose practices provide a degree of emotional satisfaction but do not contribute to their emotional maturity

or authentic spiritual growth. I know this to be so because I sometimes meet and talk with members of various Kriya Yoga groups, and observe that, often, their primary interest is in belonging to a group rather than in taking our teaching to heart and engaging in necessary self-analysis and other transformative practices.

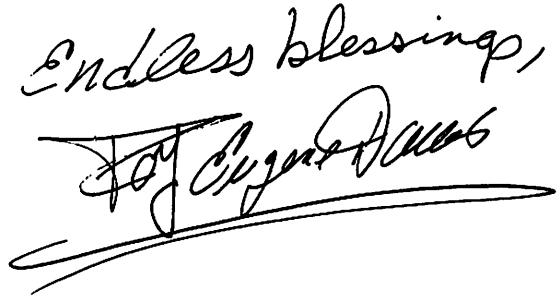
All Kriya Yoga initiates should remember that the most effective spiritual practice is intentional right living. Reading the basic literature and performing recommended meditation routines is supportive but cannot take the place of intentional, purposeful living at all times. Many Kriya initiates are somewhat inspired by reading the literature and calmed and pacified by their meditation practices, then continue to let their programmed mental and emotional states and routine social behaviors determine their lives. Thus, except for the fact that they are in touch with an enlightenment tradition which can provide them potential freedom, they live for the most part like adherents of other religious groups—finding their participation somewhat supportive of the human condition but not experiencing the real spiritual growth of which they are capable.

Whenever we awaken from sleep, our first thoughts should be of God, our inner attunement with the gurus, and of how we are going to effectively and appropriately live our lives. During the day as we attend to our duties and routine activities, thoughts of God, gurus, and how to live constructively should be blended with thoughts necessary to the performance of our duties. In this way we soon experience that we are always aware of our relationship with the Infinite, and of a Presence which is no longer a hoped-for connection but which is vividly obvious to our perception. We are living in the ocean of the One Life of God which can be consciously acknowledged and experienced as we give our attention to it and let self-consciousness dissolve in favor of allowing our soul nature unrestricted expression.

Come here for scheduled group retreats when you can, and for personal, private retreats. When here, use your time effectively: get plenty of rest, meditate regularly, and experience the regenerative powers of silence. We aspire to maintain the CSA retreat facility as a siddha ashram, a quiet place charged with the energies of the masters of our tradition. When you are here, let yourself be beneficially supported by the environment as well as by your own involvements with self-care practices and soul-enlivening routines. A most helpful thing to do is to let your mind be unencumbered by thoughts

of mundane matters and open to higher possibilities for renewal and discovery.

At all times, wherever you are, be mindful of the basic premise of our path: that our right actions (and God's grace) effectively remove all mental, physical, and circumstantial obstacles to our innate urge to have awareness restored to wholeness. An important action (kriya) is that of letting go of unwanted and nonuseful mental attitudes, emotional states, behaviors, and relationships, in favor of ones which are more helpful to the actualization of our higher purposes. We sometimes err in thinking that if we do certain things in the prescribed way—affirm, meditate, profess faith in God, eat right, continue to hope for the best, and more—that desired changes will automatically occur. While these actions can be helpful, of immediate benefit is to renounce (lay down, throw away, dismiss) all that we know to be nonessential to our higher purposes while giving attention to what is essential. It is often characteristic of human (self-conscious) nature to energetically attempt to overcome that which only has to be released and thereafter avoided or ignored.



Back Cover: Photo of an oil painting of Paramahansa Yogananda. Last year I commissioned a northern California artist to do this portrait. When Master was not appearing in public, he tied his long hair in a knot behind his head and wore ordinary clothes. This portrait portrays his personality as I remember him during our informal meetings in Los Angeles and at his desert retreat near Twentynine Palms, CA.

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

October – December Number 6

The Eternal Way

THE INNER MEANING OF THE *BHAGAVAD GITA*

The portrayal of mental conflict and emotional unrest as dramatized by Arjuna, one of the central characters in the *Bhavagad Gita*, a philosophical text written centuries ago, is behavior typical of many devotees of today. One of Arjuna's problems was that of being attached to the false idea that he was other than a radiant, God-expressed being.

The habit of ignoring our innate awareness of Reality because of preferring to cling to conditioned beliefs, moods, and circumstances of convenience, is one which keeps us in self-created bondage. When we know who and what we are, and what the real nature of the world is, we can no longer persist in pretending that we are weak, fearful, or inept. Instead, we are inspired and motivated to use intelligence and intuition to see through the shadow-appearance of what is not true, to *that* which is permanently real. This is every soul's spiritual duty.

Our examination of the opening verses of chapter one of the *Gita* is prefaced with an explanation of the genealogy and names of the central characters in this revealing story.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates in response to questions and inquiries. Regular reader participation is cordially invited.

That which is real behind the shifting tides of life is eternal.
Unenlightened people often misperceive the truth.
– Paramahansa Yogananda –

Publisher's Note

Radiance is published quarterly as a forum (a gathering of interested persons for the purpose of meaningful communication) for initiate disciples of the Kriya Yoga tradition renewed in the Current Era by Mahavatar Babaji. Most readers will have been initiated by me. Readers who were initiated by any ordained representative of the guru line from Babaji to Paramahansa Yogananda and his successors are welcome to receive this publication.

Because *Radiance* is written for initiates of this tradition, please keep the information confidential. You may, of course, share it with other Kriya initiates. Inquiries about this path can be directed to our office.

If you are a Kriya Yoga initiate and someone has shared this issue with you, you are invited to subscribe for yourself by referring to the information at the bottom of this page.

It is recommended that *Truth Journal* magazine also be read, for supplemental study and for news of our programs.

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The Inner Meaning of the Bhagavad Gita

The *Bhagavad Gita*, which comprises but a small portion of the lengthy epic *Mahabharata*, has spiritually nurtured and inspired millions of devotees for over two thousand years. A common translation of the title is descriptive of a Holy or Divine Song: Sanskrit *bhaj*, to revere or love, to share wealth and glory; and *gita*, from the verb-root *gai*, to sing. The title is prefaced with the word *srimad* (or *shrimat*), from the verb-root *sri*, to flame, or to diffuse light.

In eighteen concise chapters, in which Arjuna, the devotee, and Krishna, his friend and teacher and a personification of divine power and grace in fleshly form, are portrayed as the central characters, a broad range of philosophical views are explored and practical instruction about how to live skillfully and fulfill personal destiny is given. The oldest published commentary available was written by Shankara in the ninth century of the Current Era. Countless others have also written about the *Gita*, including philosophers and religious proponents who endeavored to find in its pages support for their own views, and scholars intent upon personal discovery or who try to explain its essence for readers of their times.

Swami Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda's guru, wrote a commentary on the *Gita* during the early years of the last decade of the nineteenth century. After conducting discussion groups based on the scripture, he took his notes to his guru, Lahiri Mahasaya, and asked him to clarify certain points.

Paramahansaji's first commentaries on the *Gita* were published many years ago by Self-Realization Fellowship as a series of articles in their magazine (*Inner Culture* until 1944 when the name was changed to *East-West*, now *Self-Realization Magazine*). During his later years and concluding in 1951, he wrote and dictated a new fifteen hundred-page commentary on the *Gita* as his last major literary work. I visited him at his desert retreat near Twentynine Palms, California, the evening of the day he finished the final chapter. At that time he expressed his joy in having completed the work. During

the evening of January 5, 1952, when many of his disciples gathered for his birthday celebration at the international headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship on Mount Washington, a suburb of Los Angeles, he exclaimed, "A new scripture has been born! You will see [know], when it is published next year!"

My guru experienced his mahasamadhi (conscious transition from the body) two months later. In the 1952 spring issue of *Self-Realization Magazine* which featured news of his passing, a half page announcement informed readers that his commentary would be published the following year, to be titled *God Speaks to Arjuna*. Because of the need for careful and precise editing, it was later decided to withhold book publication announcements until a more suitable schedule could be determined. Three years ago, a representative of Self-Realization Fellowship informed me by letter that editing of the manuscript was in the final stages. Until this time, no publication date has been announced.

In the first ten chapters of the *Gita*, the way of knowledge (*jnana yoga*), the way of selfless work or service (*karma yoga*), and the way of surrendered devotion to God (*bhakti yoga*) are described. In the eleventh chapter, Arjuna is enabled by Krishna to perceive the reality of Consciousness expressive as all things. The final seven chapters are devoted to explaining from a higher perspective how to apply what has been learned to daily life and experience. The cosmic conscious episode described in the eleventh chapter can be understood as but the beginning of a new and higher stage of life during which knowledge has to be applied and integrated into the fabric of continuing existence.

When read superficially, the text informs us of a great strife that occurred between opposing factions (who were cousins) on a battlefield north of the present day city of New Delhi. When insightfully interpreted as an allegory—a symbolic story in which characters, objects, and events symbolically illustrate ideas or moral and spiritual principles—the esoteric or inner meaning portrays a drama far more significant than any transitory historical event. What is revealed is the progress of the soul's awakening from self-conscious involvements with psychological and physical circumstances to realization of its true nature as pure consciousness, the challenges commonly confronted during the process, and knowledge which removes awareness from all that is suppressive or restrictive.

In the text, knowledgeable, purposeful action is extolled as being productive of desired results on the spiritual growth path. For this reason I have chosen to examine it in the light of *Kriya Yoga*: the way of effective actions which remove all mental and physical obstacles to soul unfoldment (Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* 2:2). While some recommended actions are outer and supportive of mind-body circumstances, most of them are inner because it is here that transformation is effected and adjustments in states of consciousness occur.

The truths explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* have great value to every person who sincerely aspires to enlightened (knowledgeable) understanding of life's processes and of the way to facilitate rapid, authentic spiritual growth that culminates in illumination of consciousness and soul liberation. Mind-clouded, sense-bound existence characteristic of ordinary human experience is painful and devoid of meaningful purpose. What is needed is for the mind to be illumined by the soul's innate light and for the senses to be subject to the soul's will or capacity to freely choose. Self-consciousness is then transcended and life flows smoothly under the direction of soul-originating impulses supported by grace. The actions of grace are the effective influences of the inclination of the omnipresent Spirit of God to fulfill the purposes of life.

As soul-mind-body beings relating to the physical realm, we are instinctively and intuitively directed to fulfill basic desires and to satisfy needs essential to our survival, security, well-being, and continuing growth. To this end, we innately desire to learn how to live in harmony with life's processes, have life-enhancing desires easily fulfilled, experience spontaneous satisfaction of needs, and know and realize our spiritual potential. When soul awareness is not yet pronounced, we may be inclined to give attention to all of these matters except our spiritual growth. While doing this may result in marginal human happiness, it will not satisfy the deep-seated desire of the heart (soul) to awaken to Self-knowledge which allows God-experience and transcendent realizations.

In Sanskrit literature, the first chapter is the introduction to the main body of the text. To have access to the real message of the *Bhagavad Gita* we have to carefully examine this chapter to acquire an understanding of the purpose of the book and the esoteric meanings of the names of the main characters. In the *Mahabharata* story, preceding the section which includes the *Bhagavad Gita*, the main

characters of the drama are introduced in the following unusual ways:

In ancient India, at Hastinapur, there lived a King of the solar dynasty whose name was Santanu. The first of his two queens was named Ganga (Ganges). When she left him, he wed Satyavati.

The King met Ganga while walking beside the Ganges River and asked her to be his wife. The King did not then know that Ganga was actually a manifestation of the river in human form. She agreed to his proposal only after the King promised not to interfere with anything she might do after she became his queen. If he ever interfered, she would forsake him immediately.

When their first son was born, Ganga carried him from the palace and threw him into the river. Because of his earlier promise not to interfere with her actions, the King did not attempt to prevent her actions.

Six more sons were born, and each of them in turn were given to the Ganges by the queen. When the eighth son was born, the King implored his queen not to do with him as she had done with the first seven. At that, Ganga left the King, rushed to the river, threw herself into it, and vanished.

The King lavished affection upon his remaining son, Deva Vrata, providing for his education and training in all arts and skills befitting a prince and heir.

One day, King Santanu went hunting in the forest. Resting under the shade of a tree by a river, he saw lotus petals floating in the waters. Following the stream of petals to their source he saw a charming damsel, Satyavati, putting them into the river as a ritual offering.

Remaining out of the young woman's sight, the king followed her when she returned home, where she lived with her father, Dasa Raja, also known as the fisher-king because his main activity was fishing. Santanu talked with Dasa Raja, requesting consent for the daughter to become his wife and queen.

Dasa Raja agreed, but stipulated that his daughter be the principal queen among the King's wives, and that her son be the successor to Santanu's throne.

Santanu, wanting his son, Deva Vrata, to succeed him as King, refused the terms of the marriage and returned to his palace. As time passed, everyone around him became aware of his unhappiness. Prince Deva Vrata decided to do something about the situation and, without telling anyone of his plan, went alone to Dasa Raja and asked him to consent to the marriage of Satyavati and

his father, King Santanu. To reassure Dasa Raja about his daughter's future and the future of her son, Prince Deva Vrata promised that he himself would not claim the throne and that he would never marry or have any children. Because of these two vows, Prince Deva Vrata thereafter became known as Bhisma (the "terrible" or formidable, because of his courageous vow).

King Santanu and Satyavati were married. Two sons were born of their union: Chitrangada, who died at an early age and Vichitravirya, who was weak. After Santanu's demise, Vichitravirya became King but the kingdom was really ruled by Bhisma.

When Vichitravirya grew to adulthood, Bhisma decided that the King should have a queen. With this plan in mind, he went to the court of King Kashiraj, where a gathering of royal families assembled for the purpose of having their princesses choose husbands from among the princes who were also there. King Kashiraj had three marriageable daughters who were at the gathering. In keeping with a tradition of that ancient culture, Bhisma waited until they wandered away from the larger group, put them into his chariot, and rushed back to Hastinapur.

The three princesses were named Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika. Amba prayed to be released, because in her heart, she was already promised to another man. Bhisma let her go and continued onward with the other two sisters.

King Vichitravirya, because of his weak constitution, died soon after marrying Ambika and Ambalika. His two widowed wives then sought the company of the sage, Veda Vyasa, and by him had sons. Ambika's son, Dhritarashtra, was born blind. Ambalika's son, Pandu, was of light complexion.

Bhisma continued to rule the kingdom. When Dhritarashtra and Pandu grew to adulthood, Pandu ascended the throne because the eldest son, Dhritarashtra, was blind.

Pandu had two wives, Kunti and Madri. Before her marriage, Kunti, testing the power of a mantra she had learned, inadvertently invoked the blessings of the Sun and gave birth to a male child. Because it was considered to be illegitimate, the son was adopted by a carpenter and later became known as Karna, a hero of the Kaurava clan. After marriage, Kunti invoked the gods who controlled dharma (righteous actions), prana, (vital forces), and fire (power of transformation). From these unions were born Yudhisthira, Bhima, and Arjuna, the first three of the sons of Pandu. Kunti then taught the mantras to Madri, who could only use them once. Madri invoked twin gods and begat twin sons, Nakul and Sahadeva.

The five sons of Pandu were known as the Pandavas.

When the brothers grew to adulthood, they participated in a contest held by King Drupada for the purpose of having a husband chosen for his daughter, Draupadi. Those vying for Draupadi's favor had to lift a heavy bow, string it, and shoot an arrow through the eye of a fish that was hanging above a revolving wheel with a hole in the center. More, the archer had to aim by looking into a reflection pool below. Arjuna, among all of the contestants, was successful. Returning to their home with Draupadi, the brothers asked Kunti, their mother, to come outside to see what they had brought. She replied, "Whatever you have brought, share among yourselves." Draupadi thus became the wife of all five of the Pandavas.

The blind Dhritarashtra, brother of King Pandu, fathered one hundred sons and one daughter, cousins to the five Pandava princes. When King Pandu died, Duryodhana, the firstborn son of Dhritarashtra, sought the throne, which he felt was rightfully his since his father had been denied it because of his blindness. When Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, was put on the throne, Duryodhana conspired to remove him from rulership of the kingdom. To do this, advised by a conspirator in the plot and in possession of loaded dice, he challenged Yudhisthira to a dice game. Whoever should lose would have to go into exile for twelve years. Yudhisthira lost the game, and with his brothers and their wife, Draupadi, went into exile for the agreed upon period of twelve years. Duryodhana then assumed rulership of the kingdom.

After twelve years, the five Pandava brothers returned to Hastinapur to reclaim their rights, but were refused them. Civil war was declared. All of the royal families of that region of India took sides and gathered their armies. Krishna, a cousin of the Pandavas, asked the opposing factions to choose either him or his army. He would not participate in the battle but would put his army at the disposal of whoever wanted it while himself remaining with the other side. The Kauravas chose Krishna's army. The Pandava's chose Krishna, who agreed to be the driver of Arjuna's chariot. The outcome of the battle was then already decided, for where there is Krishna, the incarnation of righteousness, there is victory.

What are we to think about this amazing story? We learn of a King who weds an embodiment of the Ganges River, who throws her first seven sons into the water, and herself merges into the river when she is not allowed to dispatch her eighth son as she did the

first seven. We learn of plural marriages, children conceived by the power of mantra, manipulative behaviors, intrigue, deception, and finally, a decision to engage in battle. An interesting story, to be sure, but what does it have to do with our own spiritual growth? The key to understanding the drama is to find out what the names of the characters mean and what their actions and experiences reveal.

Sri Yukteswar taught that a person who studies the *Bhagavad Gita* should first be acquainted with Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the *Samkhya* philosophy of Kapila. The *Yoga Sutras* describe superconscious (*samadhi*) states, Kriya Yoga practices, awakened soul abilities (*siddhis*), and stages of enlightenment leading to liberation of consciousness (mukti or moksha). *Samkhya* philosophy enumerates the various aspects and actions of consciousness as it expresses to manifest and to sustain its self-manifestations. Since consciousness alone exists, all expressions of it are but aspects of its manifesting powers and actions.

To acquire insight into the matter before us, let us examine the genealogy and behaviors of the participants in the story in the light of *Samkhya* philosophy, the systematic enumeration of categories of cosmic manifestation of consciousness:

> Because of an impulse to express, the field of absolute pure consciousness (*Santanu*) interacted with its own outward manifestation of the conscious side of nature (*Ganga*—Om endowed with guiding or governing intelligence). Eight aspects (sons) resulted: the first seven remain hidden or subjective; the eighth is observed or objective. The seven hidden aspects which regulate subjective cosmic processes are: two aspects, the cosmic and the individualized at the causal or fine magnetic level of creation; the cosmic and the individualized aspects at the astral or subtle life force level of creation; the cosmic and the individualized aspects at the gross physical level of creation; and one aspect which pervades the field of creation. Although in some religious traditions these aspects of consciousness are referred to as gods, they are not independent beings or forces; they are merely different aspects of one consciousness. In Vedic literature, for instance, the two aspects at the causal level are together referred to as *Vishnu*, that which preserves or maintains; the two aspects at the astral level are together referred to as *Brahma*, that which expands and causes to manifest; the two aspects at the physical level are referred to as *Shiva* (or *Mahesh-*

vara, the great Lord), that which introduces change and transformation to allow renewal. The aspect which pervades all creation is the omnipresent Spirit of God that indwells everything in manifestation without itself being confined or limited. The eighth aspect, which does not remain hidden, is cosmic individuality (*Bhisma*), the witness or observer of all that occurs, which participates in outer affairs but is not itself the ruler or determining factor, nor does it produce or create anything. Because it is not "married" it does not have "children."

Interacting with the unconscious side of nature (*Satyavati*, that which embodies truth (*sat*), or primordial nature: Om expressive as fine cosmic particles, space, and time) the enlivening aspect of consciousness causes the primordial field (*maya*—that which is form building and truth veiling) to undergo change which causes outward manifestation of itself. The first to manifest (the first child of *Satyavati*) is the aspect of primordial nature undergoing mutation from fine to gross expression, which does not last long; which is why *Satyavati's* first born son, *Chitrangada*, died early. The second manifestation or child (*Vichitravirya*) is the false or deluded sense of individualized independent existence, *ahamkara* or ego consciousness, which although peculiar and weak, is necessary for the processes of creation to occur. Because it is contractive, it is relatively powerless. It conceals knowledge but is not possessed of knowledge.

The two "wives" of ego consciousness are doubt (*Ambika*) and the power of discrimination (*Ambalika*). From doubt, blind mind (*Dhritarashtra*) is born. The mind is referred to as being blind because without sensory input to provide information, and without intelligence to interpret information, it can neither see nor know. From the power of discrimination, the faculty of intelligence (*Pandu*) is born.

In the *Mahabharata* story, it is said that *Dhritarashtra* and his wives had one hundred sons and a daughter. This means that blind mind influenced by sentiment or feeling produces numberless tendencies, not all of them constructive. The first of these was *Duryodhana* (passion, lower desire that is difficult to fight), instrumental in causing many problems. Although (in the story) *Dhritarashtra* and *Pandu* belonged to the *Kuru* clan, only *Dhritarashtra* became known as the representative of the clan because he ruled the kingdom while *Pandu*, with his two wives, secluded himself in the forest. Yogis teach the front part of the body to be the kingdom of mental and physical impulses and tendencies. The back

part of the body, the spinal pathway, rules spiritual inclinations. *Dhritarashtra's* children were referred to as *Kauravas*, which represent the destructive tendencies and habits rooted in the mind which are "enemies" of the soul's aspiration to enlightened understanding.

Pandu (pure intelligence), with his two wives, produced five children, referred to as the *Pandavas*, the sons of *Pandu* (the products of pure intelligence). With his first wife, *Kunti* (dispassionate compassion, and discernment which banishes error), the first three sons resulted: *Yudhisthira*, *Bhima*, and *Arjuna*. They symbolize the element essences (*tattvas*) of the three higher chakras in the spinal pathway.

Yudhisthira (righteousness, *dharma*, steadfast and firm) represents the ether element essence (*tattva*) in the throat chakra at the cervical section of the spine. This chakra is named *Vishudda*, the pure. The sound frequency is of the ocean's roar, the mingling of all of the sounds of the chakra prana frequencies. The color is misty grey with sparkling points of light. The seed (*bija*) mantra is *Ham* (pronounced "hum").

Bhima (dauntlessness, control of vital forces—pranayama—control of forces of nature, endless strength, formidable) represents the air element essence in the heart center at the dorsal section of the spine. This chakra is named *Anahata*, unstruck sound—like the flowing peal of a gong—the sound frequency heard inwardly by a meditator. The color is blue. The seed mantra is *Yam* ("yum").

Arjuna (purity of mind and heart, the aspiring devotee, fiery self-control) represents the fire element essence in the lumbar chakra, midway between the higher and lower chakras. This chakra is named *Manipura*, the city of gems. The color is red. The sound frequency is as of a harp. The seed mantra is *Ram* ("rum").

Pandu's second wife, *Madri* (spiritual intellect swayed by sentiment) gave birth to twins, which symbolize the element influences of the two lower chakras.

Nakul (the stillness of the mind, night) represents the water element essence in the chakra at the sacral region of the spine. This chakra is named *Swadisthan*, the abode of the self. The color is of a white crescent moon. The sound frequency is of a flute. The seed mantra is *Vam* ("vum").

Sahadeva (devotion, always shining, day) represents the earth element essence in the base chakra at the bottom of the spinal pathway. This chakra is named *Muladhara*, foundation. The color is yellow. The sound frequency is like the buzzing of a disturbed

bee. The seed mantra is *Lam* ("lum").

Draupadi, the common wife of the five *Pandava* brothers, represents *kundalini*, the innate creative power of the soul. The five sons of *Draupadi* are the sound and light frequencies perceived in the chakras when the actions of *kundalini shakti* enlivens them.

Other characters mentioned in the text, and alternative names of main characters, will be described as they are introduced.

The eldest *Pandava* brother, *Yudhisthira*, gambled with his eldest cousin, *Duryodhana*, lost the match, and was banished. When righteousness plays with unrighteousness, errors in judgment can occur, causing clouding of awareness and an interlude of discomfort. Then, to reclaim the former status, one must directly engage the problem and remove it. Hence, the symbolism of the war as detailed in the first chapter.

Translating and commenting on this scripture requires alert attention to details regarding the purpose of the original author or authors. It is believed by some scholars that minor changes have been made in the text, and perhaps some additional material included, in the early centuries after it was first composed. Also, for many centuries, before the invention of the printing press, the entirety of the *Mahabharata*, of which the *Bhagavad Gita* is but a small part, was communicated by storytellers who had memorized it. The elaborate, colorful, and sometimes dramatic tales made it easy to remember and popular with people in all walks of life. Even without knowledge of the inner meaning of the story, listeners (and, later, readers) could derive benefit at whatever level the message was comprehended. At an exoteric (outer) level, there is much of value to be learned in regard to meaningful human existence, the well-being of everyone in society, and the importance and usefulness of sustained spiritual aspiration.

We must remember that the story is told about a great war between rival factions, while relating incidents and contriving dialogue for symbolic characters, to portray the drama of individual psychological transformation and spiritual growth. The words attributed to Arjuna and Krishna, and of the few other characters who are given lines to speak, were not actually spoken by them. They are words used in a fictional work, in which timeless truths are clearly and directly affirmed and which has served well the cause for which it was intended.

Because of the unique way Sanskrit sentences are constructed in comparison to English language usage, it is necessary to carefully paraphrase into English to preserve the meaning of the verses. Among Sanskrit scholars, subtle differences in word meanings are given. Everyone who examines the text perceives its meaning in accord with his or her own capacity to discern and comprehend.

In writing this commentary my approach is based on what I have been able to learn from various sources, and personal insight and discernment. While acknowledging the useful contributions of others, especially their various translations from Sanskrit to English, I have chosen to go directly to the core of the theme, to explain it in plain, clear, and (I hope) easy to understand terms. I have, of course, referred to some available source material written by Sri Yukteswar and by my guru.

A paragraph explaining the meaning of each verse is provided in contemporary English, followed by an explanation and commentary when considered necessary or helpful. Occasional quotations from *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* are from my book *Life Surrendered in God.*

Note: My major writing focus for the next several months is to complete this commentary on the *Gita*. The material presented here represents but the first draft. Some changes will be made and new material will be included by the time the project is completed.

Refraining from destructive behaviors, actualizing constructive behaviors, steadiness of meditation posture, regulation and transformation of vital forces, internalization of attention to flow it back to the source, concentration, meditation, and superconsciousness (samadhi), are the eight stages of yogic practice leading to realization of God and liberation of consciousness.

– Yoga Sutras 2:29 –

CHAPTER ONE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

In this first chapter, Arjuna is confronted by a challenge which, to him, is of immense proportions—one which affords him an exceptional opportunity to learn of the dynamic processes of life and to outgrow his conditioned limitations.

Dhritarashtra asked:

1. Assembled on Dharmakshetra-Kurukshetra, desirous to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do, Sanjaya?

   Assembled on the field of righteousness-the field of unrighteousness, alert and prepared for confrontation, what did the conditioned mental tendencies and the virtuous soul qualities do? Introspective discrimination, reveal to me the outcome.

Retiring into introspective contemplation, unenlightened mind inquires: What happens when soul-impelled, virtuous aspirations and the multitude of self-serving tendencies rooted in the subconscious, conflict in the mind-body field of awareness where righteous impulses and ego-based psychological drives are equally intent upon being victorious?

Dhritarashtra is the father of egocentric drives and tendencies, and of delusion and illusion which maintains the stability of the kingdom or realm of conditioned awareness. When partially informed, but blind to ultimate truth, one must resort to introspective discrimination (Sanjaya) to acquire understanding.

Sanjaya replied:

2. Seeing the army of the sons of Pandu in battle formation, King Duryodhana, approaching his teacher, spoke these words:

Aware that virtuous qualities were fully prepared to confront and eliminate all of the self-serving tendencies and characteristics, desire to ensure their survival directed the mind to its storehouse of memories: the impressions (samskaras) of prior perceptions and experiences.

3. Behold, O teacher, this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed by the son of Drupada who is wise because of your instruction;

O storehouse of memories, see the great assemblage of the virtuous qualities, born of pure intelligence, which are directed by concentration supported by knowledge based on experience.

4. Here are heroes, mighty archers. In battle they are equal to Bhima, Arjuna, Yudyahana and Virata, and the great warrior Drupada;

Here are heroic qualities, skillful in action. In any contest they are equal to innate strength and life-force control, fiery will power, faith-based determination, and equanimity in all circumstances;

5. Dristaketu, Chekitana, the King of Kashi, known for valor, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and Saiba who is strong among men;

Restraint which removes all obstacles, higher intelligence, enthusiasm, mastery of mental and sensory impulses, peace and satisfaction when overcoming obstacles, and concentrated discipline giving superior strength;

6. And the powerful Yudhamanyu, valorous Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi, all of them are indeed great warriors.

And dispassion, bravery in actions, happiness arising from kindness, and the enlivened powers of kundalini expressing through the chakras.

When we are simultaneously aware of our ego-centered desires and of our soul-impelled inclinations, we may feel that the spirit is willing to do the right thing but the conditioned behaviors are also compelling. We may be aware of our virtues and soul qualities while, at the same time, want to fulfill the impulses and urgings of the senses and restless mind. Even when aware of our potential for choosing the right course of action, we may feel ourselves to be at the mercy of our desires, whims, and habitual behaviors which are rooted

in memory of past experiences. If we are mentally perverse (inclined to twist valid information to suit our self-centered purposes) or willfully inclined to perform actions which are life-restricting rather than life-enhancing, we may even actively resist our nobler impulses, choosing the darkness of ignorance and its consequent painful effects to the light of knowledge and its redemptive influences. At such times we may review our ego-supported qualities, as described in the following verses.

7. Know now our own distinguished warriors! O highest of the twice-born, I describe the leaders by their proper names;

   Be aware of whom our army consists; I shall name and define them;

8. Yourself, Bhisma, Karna, and Kripa, Asvattahaman who is victorious in battle, Vikarna and also the sons of Somadatta;

   Memories of experiences which support change and transformation; egoism because of delusion, selfishness, sentiment or emotional sympathy; worldliness which is attached to superficial, transient things and circumstances; hatred or strong dislike; and inconstancy;

9. And many other heroes willing to risk their lives for my sake, with various weapons at their command and all of them skilled in battle;

   And the many other psychological tendencies with addictive drives to protect and support strong desires, with their many ways of expressing and all of them effective in their actions.

10. Our army, guarded by Bhisma, is sufficient; the army guarded by Bhima in insufficient.

    The psychological tendencies and drives, defended by the unenlightened mind, is sufficient to meet the challenge; the virtuous qualities, defended by life force control is insufficient.

11. Therefore, during the progress of this war, let each of you be in your assigned place, and protect Bhisma!

    Therefore, in this contest about to begin, each of you play your allotted role, and protect the unenlightened mind!

When egocentric self-consciousness with its conditioned psychological nature gathers its forces to protect itself against unwanted change or transformation, all of its programmed characteristics rally to its defense. Then, feeling smug and falsely secure, one may endeavor to actively resist useful or constructive change for the better. In verse seven, the words "twice-born" are used to flatter, to attempt to strengthen and encourage the memories (*samskaras*) which support the mind's actions. In actuality, one who is twice-born is awake to spiritual realities.

When in a self-centered, decided, and defensive mode, one may, under the spell of delusion and illusion, mistakenly presume to be more powerful and capable than all of the soul qualities. Thus, in the narration, passionate desire impels the thought: "Because we (the array of instinctive drives and conditioned tendencies supported by memories of experience) are many and strong, our forces are sufficient while the forces of virtue and righteousness are not sufficient—not equal to the task of overcoming us." There is seldom any chance that reason can be brought to bear to alter the deluded mental condition. What is needed is to introduce into it the transformative influences of awakened soul awareness.

12. To encourage and give happiness to Duryodhana, his grandfather (Bhisma), roaring like a lion, powerfully blew his conch.

    To rally the psychological tendencies and drives and to stimulate desire to prevail, the unenlightened mind aroused vital forces to stir and energize the senses.

13. Suddenly, the conch horns, kettledrums, cymbals, small drums, and trumpets all tumultuously sounded.

    Then, the intensity of stimulated desires and energized senses became more pronounced.

When ego-based, false and insubstantial, confidence neutralizes our power of rational thinking, we may erroneously believe that we are capable of fulfilling our personal desires. Such confidence, even though superficial, may temporarily result in a release of energy that empowers us to proceed in the direction we have chosen or to accomplish that which is the object of our urgent desire.

14. Then, standing in the great chariot yoked to white horses, Lord Krishna and Arjuna, the son of Pandu, also sounded their glorious conches.

The indwelling Spirit of God that commands the senses and the soul's ardent aspiration to prevail also manifested signs of evidential powers.

15. Krishna sounded his Pancajanya; Arjuna sounded his Devadatta; Bhima, of mighty deeds, blew the great conch horn Paundra.

The Spirit of God manifested as the sound of Om, the sound of the prana frequency of the lumbar chakra also resounded, as did that of the dorsal chakra.

16. Yudhisthira blew Anantavjaya; Nakula and Sahadeva sounded Sughosa and Maniushpaka.

The prana frequency at the cervical chakra, and at the sacral and base chakras also manifested.

17. The King of Kashi, the supreme archer, and Sikhandin, the great warrior; Dhristadyuna, Varata, and Satyaki, the invincible:

Enthusiasm, spirituality, self-control, the virtue of equanimity, and truth consciousness that is invincible, were enlivened and manifested.

18. Drupada, and the sons of Draupadi, and the son of Subadra, O Lord of earth, all sounded their respective conches.

Concentrated pure love, kundalini shakti's chakra manifestations, and their qualities, were also expressive.

Krishna, as the driver of Arjuna's chariot with white horses, symbolizes the indwelling Spirit of God, the soul, being in control of the purified senses.

When the devotee's attention turns inward during meditation, Om, the primordial sound may be heard. Om is evidence of the reality of God because it flows from the field of God. Here, Om is portrayed as Krishna's horn or trumpet, with which he blares forth a commanding sound to make his presence known to both the qualities of virtue and the tendencies of the deluded mind.

Before discerning the sound of Om, other sound frequencies ema-

nating from the kundalini-enlivened chakras may be discerned: buzzing like bees from the base chakra, the note of a flute at the second chakra, the resonance of a harp at the third chakra, the peal of a gong at the fourth chakra, and the mixture of sounds at the cervical chakra. A variety of sounds may be discerned as various prana influences interact and their forces manifest. By merging awareness in these sounds until the clear stream of Om is heard (and is eventually transcended), the meditating devotee can successfully withdraw feelings and attention from physical and mental phenomena and experience progressive stages of superconscious perception.

19. The great noise burst asunder the hearts of the sons of Dhritarashtra, and reverberated through the earth and sky.

The overwhelming sound influences severely disturbed the psychological tendencies and drives rooted in self-consciousness, and spread throughout the devotee's body, mind, and field of awareness.

As Om contemplation becomes more concentrated, the superior influences of the primordial sound disrupt the coordinated, conditioned actions of the mind, weakening and dissolving destructive drives while constructively impressing the mind with entirely beneficial characteristics. Eventually, darkness and heaviness (tamasic influences) and restlessness (rajasic influences) are eliminated and only luminous (sattvic influences) remain. Thus, for mental and physical mastery, contemplative meditation is far superior to internal dialogue or superficial endeavors to master impulses.

20. Arjuna, his chariot bearing the banner of Hanuman, seeing the sons of Dhritarashtra at their battle stations, took up his bow.

Concentrated aspiration reinforced by soul-will, under the sign of victory, aware of the self-serving psychological tendencies and drives and their resistance to change, prepared to confront them.

The banner of Hanuman signifies one who will be victorious. Confident of victory, seeing what must be done, the devotee takes up the arms of righteousness, fully willing and prepared to successfully engage in life's processes and awaken through the stages of spiritual growth.

21. Then, O Lord of earth, Arjuna spoke these words to Krishna: Imperishable One, put my chariot between the two armies,

Then, acknowledging that which regulates spiritual and material matters, concentrated aspiration reinforced by soul-will, chose to have innate, pure consciousness be positioned between the contesting forces,

22. So that I may see those whom I must fight.

So that obstacles to accomplishment can be clearly apprehended.

23. I now behold those who are assembled, eager and willing to serve the material-minded son of Dhritarashtra.

All of the obstacles to spiritual growth and illumination of consciousness are now clearly seen and known.

When we take our stand for right action, we center ourselves spiritually by establishing ourselves in awareness of our true nature as an individualized expression of pure consciousness. This is the explanation of why Arjuna (the aspiring devotee) asked Krishna (innate pure consciousness) to be positioned between the opposing factions. As Krishna did not take part in the battle but only remained on the side of righteousness, so pure consciousness does not act but makes possible all actions. When we are established in Self or soul awareness, we can objectively see what our duty is, and know how to effectively do it.

– to be continued in the next issue of RADIANCE

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are requested by readers of this publication. Please use the form provided with each issue of *Radiance* to participate in our open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of others.

Why are Kriya pranayamas practiced in sets of twelve? What about initiates who have been practicing for several months, or years—how many should they practice? Is there a limit?

For new initiates, twelve rounds or cycles of Kriya pranayama are recommended for the purpose of ensuring that attention is given to the procedure rather than to the numbers, and to allow time for the prana flows to be established and the nervous system to adapt to the new experience. After a few months, one can increase the number done at each meditation session. Multiples of twelve are usually recommended because it is generally taught that human evolution more obviously occurs during twelve year cycles. There is no reason why one cannot ignore the traditional groupings of twelve. A common routine is to do as many as you feel comfortable doing, without forcing yourself to reach a predetermined number. So long as the flow is smooth and easy, just go along with it. When you feel inclined to conclude pranayama practice, draw the current upward and flow into meditation.

Paramahansa Yogananda mentioned, in his autobiography, that some yogis have been known to practice one thousand pranayamas a day. Doing this requires eight to nine hours, which is more time than the average meditator has to give to their practice, especially when extra time is needed to rest in the aftereffects tranquility of superconsciousness when pranayama practice ceases. More important than numbers, is depth of practice.

What determines whether or not meditators experience authentic samadhi (superconscious) states?

Progress is determined by the degree of surrender of self-consciousness to superconsciousness, usually assisted by concentrated meditation practice. Some people easily experience preliminary superconscious states, and subtle and finer states, while others continue their practices for many years without success.

It is helpful to have a clear idea of what samadhi is. It is a clear state of awareness; it is not a trance state or a hypnotic condition. When our awareness is removed from emotional and mental processes and we remain alert, clear awareness is experienced. Clear mind-identified awareness is clear self-consciousness, which is beneficial to experience. When soul awareness becomes more pronounced, superconscious states unfold.

Samadhi is not a state to "go into" or to try to "produce" by visualization or any other procedure. Samadhi (superconsciousness) is our natural, soul awareness state experienced when we are no longer involved with sensory perceptions, feelings, or mental processes. When superconsciousness is experienced and becomes permanent—when we can maintain that state even when not meditating—it can remain constant even when we are involved with thoughts, feelings, relationships, and actions. When this is our constant state, we remain a witness of our thoughts, emotions, actions, and relationships without losing our soul awareness and clear understanding.

Preliminary samadhi states may be in relationship to an object. We may meditate upon light, Om, or some aspect of Deity and so identify with the object of our meditation that our awareness merges with it. This is oneness, samadhi, with support (of the object focused upon). Samadhi without support is more liberating: it is clear experience of absolute being-existence.

Many meditators succeed in experiencing samadhi with support and do not aspire to go beyond that state. They may, while superconsciously tranquil, explore the vast mental or causal realms and have a variety of interesting perceptions and experiences. They may experience considerable inner freedom at such times, only to revert to former, conditioned viewpoints after meditation. One's ability to experience preliminary samadhi states is not evidence of mental purity, enlightenment (true knowledge), or of freedom from subcon-

scious and genetic influences. I have known several yogis with pronounced abilities to experience preliminary superconscious states at will, who, when in ordinary circumstances, were not established in harmlessness, truthfulness, honesty, conservation and right use of their vital forces, free from attachments, or calmly settled in soul satisfaction—the foundation practices for one on the spiritual path.

A few years ago, a yogi from India visited the United States. He had spent approximately thirty-five years, beginning as a teenager, in meditative seclusion. He was advertised as being able to give shaktipat (to awaken kundalini in others by merely being in his presence) and was referred to as a saint. When he visited a city in North Carolina, one of our members attended one of his public sessions. His physical appearance was similar to that of Lahiri Mahasaya when Lahiri was a middle-aged man. There was even some gossip passing among individuals: some of the yogi's disciples believed him to be Lahiri Mahasaya reincarnated. After the session, someone asked the yogi if he was Lahiri Mahasaya. Pretending to be shy, and smiling coyly, he said, "That is for you to find out."

The direct response should have been, "No, I am not." That would have been honest. Instead, his behavior and his words served to keep the gossip alive. Several months later, after returning to India, he died. Many of his disciples refused to bury or cremate the body because they thought he might reanimate it. Some even claimed to have received channeled messages from him to that effect. After several days, when it was obvious that he was permanently gone, the disciples disposed of the body.

Paramahansaji always counseled me not to settle for partial or temporary superconscious states, but to aspire to complete awakening to Self-knowledge and God-realization in this life cycle.

A common reason why many devotees do not experience superconscious states is because they do not sincerely want to do so. They would like to experience more refined states while, at the same time, maintain the status quo. They desire spiritual awakening but they are not willing to renounce (let go of) rigid mental and emotional states or their restrictive mental attitudes and personal behaviors.

> I teach hatha yoga and am always amazed that so few people who participate are interested in knowing more about philosophical principles, or in practicing meditation on a regular schedule. I

am thinking of not teaching for the public anymore, but to schedule my time and energy only for sincere seekers. What do you think about this?

The main thing is to follow your inner guidance, being sure you are doing what you think to be right rather than reacting to the situation. It is true that, of the thousands of people who are interested in hatha yoga practice for health benefits, only a few are interested in the deeper aspects of the philosophy and practices of yoga.

If you continue to teach open hatha yoga classes, just do it as service, without expectations. Doing this is of value to others and perhaps some "spiritual seeds" will be planted. This disinterested, selfless service is karma yoga. It can be helpful to some participants and always helpful to you. Be on the lookout for those individuals who are more open and responsive.

If your decision is to remove yourself from public involvement, to only work with sincerely interested spiritual aspirants, this is also all right. Avoid being disturbed because of the seeming lack of interest. Be true to yourself.

Every truth teacher is aware of the fact that, among the many who seem to be interested in learning, only a few are sufficiently focused enough to go more deeply into spiritual growth processes and stay with them. During the past forty years that I have been writing and teaching, with hundreds of thousands of people having had access to my writings and seminars, only a small number of them have "heard" what I have to say and applied it to their lives in meaningful ways. I am not discouraged by this because I write and teach because I know it is my duty to do so. I do it, and leave the results to God. We cannot instantly change others, nor can we improve their understanding if they are not receptive or are not yet capable of comprehending. We can only be agents of light to the best of our ability.

I view our offering of clear information, lifestyle guidelines, and spiritual practices, as the quantity work—spreading the word to all who might in some way benefit. The quality work is with individuals who are willing and prepared to learn and apply what is learned. Both are needed. Where you choose to put your energy is your own decision, according to what you know and feel to be right for you. Pray about it, then see what happens.

Can you advise me about being a Kriya Yoga initiate and also participating in other spiritually oriented group activities, or being a representative of other traditions? Does the latter interfere with my being successful on the Kriya Yoga path?

The Kriya Yoga path is that of mastery of mental and physical impulses, study and realization of truth, and surrender of self-consciousness in favor of God-consciousness. The main thing is to live the Kriya Yoga way as diligently as possible. When this is done, you will know what is right for you to do.

There is no harm in attending a local church or temple service of your choice if you consider it to be of value, or if members of your family enjoy attending together. Just remain true to your inner work and right living practices, and avoid confusion. So long as your heart (your being) is right with God (in tune with the Infinite), you will know what is most suitable for you.

If you experience that your attention is being scattered or that you are losing your inner attunement with the spiritual energies of the Kriya Yoga tradition, then look at your situation very closely to see whether or not useful choices need to be made in regard to your relationships and activities. If you were a member of another enlightenment tradition (and feel it is the one of your soul destiny) before being initiated into Kriya Yoga, it is certainly all right to remain in that tradition.

Explain more about listening to Om when meditating.

When meditating, with awareness at the spiritual eye, listen intently in the inner ear canals to hear any subtle sound that might be discernible. At first, you may hear a resonance that is due to echoes of environmental sounds. As you listen carefully, you may hear varied sound frequencies. There is no need to wonder about their cause or origin. Whatever sound is heard, listen to it while being attentive to hearing subtle sounds behind those. Then, be attentive to hearing finer sound frequencies behind the subtle sounds. When you hear a continuous sound, use that as a mantra. Merge your awareness into it. Imagine it as pervading all space in the universe, containing within it the physical, astral, and causal realms. Envision it as being the substance of the field of primordial nature. Con-

template it as emanating from the omnipresent field of God's consciousness. Continue listening and surrendering in it until you rest in tranquil, thoughtless awareness.

As you listen, if you perceive light at the spiritual eye, let your attention be attracted to it. Yogis teach that gold is the color of the frequency of Om; blue is the color of the frequency of God's intelligence pervading creation (some refer to this pervading intelligence as Christ consciousness or *Kutastha Chaitanya*). The brilliant white color is the frequency of consciousness beyond duality.

You may not see light when you listen to Om. The essential thing is to merge in the sound and let its attractive vibration draw your attention to the innate field of pure or absolute consciousness.

> Are there Kriya Yoga lineages "alive and well" in other parts of the world? Is there regular communication between them?

Yes, there are other lines of transmission. There are undoubtedly several from Babaji through many of his disciples other than Lahiri Mahasaya—and from Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, and their disciples.

These lineages are alive to the degree that their initiates are living the principles emphasized in this tradition; not because devotees are outwardly dramatizing their affiliation. Because many initiates were instructed to keep their practices private, there is no way to know about them. I understand that there are several gurus representing this tradition in India, most of whom prefer to teach quietly. So I have no way of knowing the quality of the work being done there. Unfortunately, some of the Kriya Yoga teachers from India, who have toured Europe and the United States in recent years, seemed to be more interested in attracting a personal following (and money) than in representing the tradition in an open, universal way.

These teachings, and initiation, are best personally transmitted from a guru or teacher to disciples and students, rather than too much being made of organizational activities. However, I think it is healthy for representatives and initiates of this tradition to know of each other and to have a spiritual friendship, while allowing for differences of viewpoints and activities. I am presently writing to several persons in India, to see if contact with representatives of our tradition can be established. I will report on this endeavor when

and if worthwhile communication occurs.

> I love God and I desire to grow spiritually, but I am having difficulty in my endeavors to effectively relate to this world. Ordinary life seems to me to be meaningless. Also, it is not easy for me to earn enough money to meet my needs or to raise my standard of living above the level of minimum survival circumstances. As a Kriya Yoga initiate, what should my world-view be, and how should I proceed in order to be more fulfilled and successful? Is my personal karmic condition holding me back?

"This world" is where we are, and where we need to learn to effectively live. Doing this is a life-enhancing spiritual exercise. To be fully involved in alert, spiritual growth practices, we need to be adequately informed. For this, we should study and contemplate until we have a clear idea of what God is, what and who we are, what our relationship to the world-as-consciousness is, and how to efficiently function. When we know these facts of life, we have to live with the understanding we have in order to learn by personal experience how to do it. Knowledge without application is of no practical value, and endeavors to live effectively without knowledge of how to do so will almost always result in marginal success, failure, or frustration. And without some success in life, mental and emotional depression is likely to be experienced. When we are depressed, present circumstances appear to be meaningless and future possibilities appear vague or nonexistent.

Consciously endeavor to clear and enlarge your field of awareness, to be more insightful and expansive. As a spiritual being, the potential to awaken to enlightened understanding is already within you. What some mystics have referred to as the "inner splendor" has only to be allowed opportunities to unfold and be expressed.

Cultivate the habit of optimism. Train yourself to be cheerful. Attend to a daily self-care routine to nurture your total wellness as well as your spiritual growth. See your life as an adventure in learning and growing. While these recommendations may seem to be mere platitudes to pacify the mind, they are, in fact, basic guidelines to wholesome, effective, satisfying living.

Cultivate the habit of possibility-thinking. See beyond the boundaries of your present circumstances, past your limitations and

restrictions, to what can be true for you. No matter what your present circumstances are, in your mind's eye, see your circumstances as you want them to be. You will then consciously and subconsciously perform the right mental and physical actions to assist in the actualization of your ideals. You will also experience the unfoldment of favorable events and circumstances which are supportive of you and which will enable you to experience easier fulfillment of desires. The universe will unfailingly meet your every need in timely and appropriate ways.

Learn to be a good steward of the resources you have, and of what comes to you. Be a competent manager of the money that flows to you. In all ways, be self-responsible while maintaining your inner attunement with the Infinite. The causative laws of life (the principles that make things happen) are the same throughout the universe of space and time. Whether in this world or in some other realm, when we understand our relationship with life processes, we are able to spontaneously demonstrate fulfillment in every way.

How does a person establish a guru disciple relationship with you? And what is involved in this relationship?

When a person desires to commit more fully to discipleship, and feels an attunement with me and the gurus of this tradition, the guru disciple relationship occurs. The disciple's role is to study, meditate, and endeavor to live the principles which are taught. My role is to mentally and spiritually support and encourage the disciple to unfold their innate capacities and experience their highest good. Because I have no special powers, I cannot cause anything to happen. I am a representative of this Kriya Yoga tradition, ordained by my guru in 1951. I am available for counsel, when necessary, although sustained personal contact is not necessary. What is more important is the inner attunement and one's dedication to right living and to spiritual practices.

It is helpful, when possible, for disciples to visit the CSA retreat center for public programs and private retreats, and to attend sessions at which I preside, whether here or when I travel to a community near them. A disciple should consider themselves to be surrendered in God and to think, feel, and behave in ways which have entirely constructive outcomes. These guidelines are not unique; they

are the same as taught in all religious traditions.

> How should we relate to others of our immediate family and close friends who may not be at all interested (or only slightly interested) in philosophical matters and spiritual practices?

Love everyone. Be kind and fair to everyone. Be respectful of everyone. Relate to everyone as a divine being. Maintain your own spiritual integrity so as not to absorb any delusions, illusions, or negative ideas and feelings from anyone. Get along comfortably and appropriately when you can. When this is impossible, make the choices you have to make.

It is not necessary that others think like us or do what we do. We do have a right, however, to be true to our own vision and to attend to matters which are meaningful to us. If we consider our existing relationships to be worthwhile, it is up to us to handle ourselves in those relationships with courteous finesse. If we have superior knowledge (or think we do) we have to prove it by how we live and behave.

Cultivate your own inner peace, so that your mind and emotions are not disturbed by what anyone says or does. It is usually easy to be calm when circumstances are as we prefer them to be. It is more challenging to remain calm in the midst of circumstances which are not of our own preference, but it can be done.

The important matter is for us to have a clear sense of our major purposes in life and to focus on their fulfillment. We are then less likely to be disturbed by the opinions or behaviors of others.

The devotee who is established in perfect tranquility,
resides in realization of the Absolute Self.
– Lahiri Mahasaya –

Addendum

Our Present Opportunity to Demonstrate Our Complete Commitment to Life

One afternoon, in 1951, Paramahansaji was talking with a small group of male disciples at Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters. We were at the entrance of the basement hallway where we happened to meet. One of the men inquired about the effects of evolution on the consciousness of people on the planet.

Master said, "Today, thousands are seeking God. In a few years, millions will be seeking God, and there will not be enough [qualified] teachers to meet that need."

We are now at that point in our history. Millions are seeking, but many do not know how or where to look. Often, when they find a worthwhile connection or a truth-oriented message, they do not know how to facilitate their spiritual growth. Or, if they do know, because of emotional and spiritual immaturity, they tend to be inattentive to basic practices which, if applied, could make a constructively transformative difference in their lives.

Most devotees of God need frequent encouragement and need to regularly renew their commitment on the path. If you need to renew your commitment, when you first sit for your next meditation practice session, open yourself to God, invoke the blessings of the gurus and saints, and pray to be more soul enlivened, sincerely dedicated to living the life-enhancing principles you know to be supportive, and for knowledge and soul-impelled aspiration that will carry you through to illumination of consciousness and final liberation in this incarnation. Pray to be an agent through which grace flows and planetary consciousness is cleansed and enlightened. Dissolve any trace of egoism in the ocean of God's omnipresent being. Ask for purity of mind and clear awareness of meaningful purpose.

Master used to say, in a voice vibrant with soul power, "Devotion to God is more important than knowledge and practice of meditation techniques. When devotion supports your practice of regular

Kriya Yoga meditation techniques, your approach to God-realization is superior to any other way."

We know the way to help ourselves to higher understanding, authentic spiritual unfoldment, and purposeful, fulfilled living. We have only to effectively use what we know. We do not need to keep looking for answers to life's meaning. We do not need to waste our time and resources in idle daydreaming. Living wholesomely with conscious intention, while nurturing Self-knowledge and awareness of God's reality and presence, is the way to soul contentment and freedom from all limitations.

Our path is natural, easy, and fulfilling. It cuts to the core of our purpose for being involved with life's processes. We do not need great revelations, surprising miracles, or exotic events in our lives to help us avoid boredom or to keep us motivated on the path. All we need to do is to go deeper into our soul nature. Here, at the heart or finest essence of our being, our innate divinity remains ever pure. Here, already present, is the reality of God.

As portrayed in the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, every person's challenge is that of coming to terms with the soul's impulse to have awareness restored to wholeness and the conditioned tendency to remain involved with memory, habit, and self-conscious attitudes, viewpoints, and relationships. The way out of the dilemma is to be centered in soul awareness and a God-relationship, view memories with objectivity, choose constructive habits, awaken from self-consciousness to cosmic awareness, see life from an enlightened point of view, and relate to the world and its inhabitants with skillful appropriateness. Doing this requires intelligence and emotional maturity; it cannot be done by a person who is attached to illusions or who is childishly dependent and addicted to restrictive conditions and circumstances.

The way of an initiate—one who has chosen or has awakened to a higher way of life—is that of commitment to all that is good and redemptive, while avoiding all that is life-diminishing and which contributes to delusions, misfortune, and frustration.

Back cover photo: Conclusion of an evening Kriya Yoga initiation service at Center for Spiritual Awareness headquarters. *August 17, 1995.*